

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME
OF THE SAGE ENDOWMENT
FUND GIVEN IN 1891 BY
HENRY WILLIAMS SAGE

Cornell University Library

PS 2414.G9

The Guillotine club and other stories, by



3 1924 022 154 904



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924022154904>

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D., LL.D.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ANDRÉ CASTAIGNE AND F. R. GRUGER



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1910

4.387844

Copyright, 1907, 1909, 1910, by
THE CENTURY Co.

Published October, 1910

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE GUILLOTINE CLUB	I
THE FOURTEENTH GUEST	101
THE MIND-READER	141
THE HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH	247

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Alphonse, the Valet	<i>Frontispiece</i>
M. Blanchelande	7
Captain Merton	14
I am rather an ascendant than a descendant . . .	22
M. le Vicomte de Laisné	31
An archbishop in his full episcopal attire . . .	41
En garde, Messieurs	81
The Colonel	88
As he grew better, he talked to me of my own life	149
That, he said, was of course hopeless	156
Told her some of their genealogies were more genial than logical	169
Susan, where was the silver kept?	201
Good gracious!	220
Talk to me. Tell stories. Laugh. Do anything	229

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

I

THOSE who have read "A Diplomatic Adventure" are aware that the valet Alphonse, who effectually aided in the historic burglary, was, perhaps with reason, uneasy as to the consequences. He finally decided to emigrate to America, where, he said, his conscience would be more at rest, a moral inference with which my friend and fellow-burglar, Captain Merton, was much pleased, remarking "that conscience was a name for several things."

It was, however, some months before Alphonse could persuade Mlle. Marie to promise to marry and go among a people who were just then industriously killing one another. The captain's wound was long since well. Certain other matters in which he was interested were

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

prospering, but it was not until later that they agreeably matured. After our brilliant success in baffling the police of Paris, I felt no desire to go in search of other adventures, and hoped none would come in search of me. I was sadly mistaken.

One morning while taking breakfast in my little salon, I said to Alphonse: "There must be in Paris some curious things strangers do not see. You have been on the police—you must know. I hear that there are thieves' clubs, or rather a thief club."

"I believe," said Alphonse, "that there is a club of thieves; but it is very exclusive, and unless monsieur should qualify—"

"Qualify?"

"No one can enter who has not been in the chain-gang or committed some well-known crime."

"Such as our burglary, Alphonse?"

"Not mine, *mon Dieu!* It may please monsieur to speak of it, but as for my humble self, even when I go to confession I reserve certain sins until I am in America. I never knew any

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

one who had seen this club, but—" and he hesitated. "Shall I bring some more toast?"

I said no.

"Monsieur is neglecting the omelet. I made it myself." He was as usual enjoying the importance a half-told story gives.

"I asked you a question. The omelet may wait."

"Pardon, Monsieur, an omelet is one of the things which cannot wait. I was about to be imprudent."

"Since we stole those papers you are absurdly cautious. Go on."

"There are other clubs—other strange clubs—more interesting."

"Such as?"

"Has monsieur ever heard of the Société des Ancêtres?"

"Of Ancestors? No. What is there curious about that? It sounds commonplace."

Alphonse smiled. "For the members it is the Society of the Guillotine. No one belongs to it who is not of the family of some one who was guillotined."

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

I questioned him eagerly.

"It is," he said, "of course registered,—all societies must be,—but as it is quiet and meets rarely, the police, when I was on the active force, did not disturb it."

"I should like to see it," I said.

"Perhaps some of the gentlemen who dine here to-day may be able further to inform monsieur. There is another club more closely watched."

"Ah, and what is that?"

"It is the Club of Jacobins."

"What! Here to-day in France! Hardly."

"Yes, Monsieur. It is more of a secret society."

"Then it is serious. Political, I presume."

"Probably. But it was a matter of rumor when I was of the police that it contained persons no one would suspect of being in such company."

"And so," I said, "it is let alone to avoid scandal."

"We did so conclude. But of course there is



THE COLONEL

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

gossip among the police. Monsieur may give up all idea of seeing it."

I did not, and resolved to speak of both clubs at dinner, which on this occasion was to be in my own rooms.

I was on intimate terms with two of my dinner guests, and especially with M. Blanchelande, a manufacturer, the owner of great cloth mills near Lyons. Our United States legation had secured for him certain contracts with our government which had proved satisfactory to the war-office and profitable to him. He was known to me as a quiet, cautious, middle-aged man, who had married in the royalist class, but who avoided politics, and collected Palissy ware, snuff-boxes, and chatelaines. He liked my dinners because of their freedom and on account of my father's Madeira and certain American luxuries.

He arrived early and said: "I have here, for the future Mme. Greville, a gold chatelaine said to have belonged to Mme. de Sévigné."

While I was admiring it and saying, "Mme.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

Possible will adore it," Alphonse announced the Count André-Joseph de la Motte and my friend Captain Arthur Merton, U. S. Army. Both men being army-officers,—the count of the Imperial Guard,—as they entered they were eagerly discussing the value of cavalry in war. The count, a man of twenty-six, owed his attractiveness to perfect manners, a certain sweetness of disposition, constant gaiety, and an amiability rarely equaled. He was intelligent rather than intellectual, but not a person of much force. I liked him.

"I asked your uncle M. Granson to dine," I said to the count, "but he would not come."

The officer shrugged his shoulders and smiling returned: "I am not sorry. He is fast breaking in mind and body and talks dangerously much about republics and the desirability of a return in France to Jacobin methods. It is rather sad. What a charming chatelaine!" he added, turning to Blanchelande.

As we stood admiring the gift, my last guest, M. Varin, *sous-préfet* of the Seine, joined us. The prefect was one of the adventurous few

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

who come up out of the peasant class to forage successfully in the capital. He looked about him, seeing at a glance who were present, and turned on me a rosy face, strong of feature, but without distinction. An *avocat* of note, a gay liver, a pronounced imperialist, and now a man of wealth, he was too apt to speak of having owed everything to himself, and had the double pride of former poverty and achieved riches. Nevertheless, he was interesting because of a successful career and because of the type he represented.

Alphonse announced, "Monsieur is served," and we went into the little salon, chatting gaily. There were no politics; a word about our war and Mexico, and by common consent we passed to safer ground and talked theaters, actors, the races, with at last a discussion of French dialects, a favorite study of mine. My Burgundy was good, my father's Madeira highly approved, and the imported cigar of the legation such as Paris knew not. I had no least idea that I was about to put a disturbing question, what Captain Merton called a "queery." I

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

said lightly, during a pause in the talk, that I was curious about the Parisian things strangers rarely see or never see.

“Such as?” asked the prefect, carelessly. “I may be of service. There are odd fish and unfathomed depths in this great turbulent sea of Paris. What are you curious about?”

“The queer clubs,” I replied. “I have heard of two—no, three.”

“What are they?” asked the count.

“Oh, one I have heard about is, I am told, the Society of Ancestors.”

I was filling my glass as I spoke and, looking up, saw that I had variously surprised my guests. The count was glancing at Blanchelande, who had lifted his eyes from a lighted match just long enough to entitle him to be justified by surprise at my question or by a burned finger in exclaiming, “*Sacré!*” and then: “Some one has been amusing you, *mon cher* Greville, with Parisian fables. The Club of Ancestors! Everybody has ancestors.”

Captain Merton glanced from one to another

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

and, as he said later, felt the social temperature fall. He became at once a partner in my curiosity:

The prefect seemed to be unconcerned and somewhat amused.

"It sounds very Chinese," he remarked. "Ancestor-worship! Any folly is possible in Paris."

"But," asked the count, "who told you of the club, Greville?"

I shook my head, and, smiling, declined to answer.

Blanchelande laughed. "Tell us ignorant Parisians about this club. Come, now, Captain Merton, are you, too, in the secret?"

The captain shook his head, and smoked.

"Well," I said, not quite liking this unexpected appearance of satirical desire to be enlightened—"well, I know nothing more except that in private this body is fairly well known as the Society of the Guillotine."

"Cheerful, that!" remarked Merton. "Must some man or his ancestor have been guillotined as a condition of membership?"

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“Delightful!” cried Blanchelande. “Ask the prefect.”

That official said gravely: “I am not in the way of knowing personally anything about it; I was never guillotined. There is such a society, as some of you very well know”—

“Oh, really, Prefect!” cried Blanchelande, laughing.

Either M. Varin did not see that the subject was unwelcome or more likely had some malicious enjoyment in the discussion, for he returned:

“Yes, although I am not what I may label ancestral, I have heard of the club. For my part, if I am anything, I am rather an ascendant than a descendant.”

The young count looked at him with an expression of grave surprise, but said nothing, while the prefect continued, his face growing sterner, “My people were still digging the earth when our betters acquired title to this society by the accolade of the guillotine.” Merton looked up from the nut he was cracking.

“Accolade of the guillotine! I like that.”

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

Blanchelande was evidently annoyed. "How absurd, Prefect! Why not a society of the hanged, or, rather, to be accurate, of their descendants?"

"Why not ascendants? It seems a rise in life," laughed Merton.

"I might possibly have a claim," returned the prefect, coolly. "The old *noblesse* took that liberty at times with their peasants. The guillotine was the answer of the ages to the gallows of the noble."

For a moment no one spoke. It was a stanch Bonapartist who sat by me, well dressed, prim, and decorated with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. It was a Jacobin in revolt who thus broke out. De la Motte's constant smile fell off like a dropped mask. Blanchelande's well-governed, middle-aged face expressed some faint disgust, for the intonation of the prefect was, of a sudden, as that of a peasant, rough, aggressive, and his manner like a challenge.

To my relief, Merton broke into the moment's emphasis of silence. "Thank heaven

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

that we in America have no claim to either honor!"

"You will not continue so fortunate," said the prefect. "You have not as yet history enough. Just now you are doing fairly well, but when you fail, as you of the North will, some heads may tumble—or even if Europe permits you to win, which is unlikely."

Perhaps my Madeira had been too often honored, for certainly the prefect had made himself unpleasant to every one. I saw Merton frown, and then, catching my warning look, resume his cigar as I said:

"Ah, Monsieur le Préfet, how little you understand us!"

"Let us drop politics," said Blanchelande.

"As you like," murmured the official. "Excuse me, M. Greville."

"Oh, the future will answer you," I returned, laughing. The talk had come so near to perils of insult that I was glad to move on and away. By mishap I got at once upon still thinner ice, for I said: "I seem at least with my curiosity to have excited curiosity. I must

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

rest unsatisfied, I fear. But what of the other society I have heard about?"

"What is that?" said De la Motte.

"The Jacobin Club."

"Delightful!" laughed the prefect. "Better and better. I must tell the minister of police."

"A Jacobin Club to-day in Paris!" said Blanchelande. "Well! well! Did ever you hear of it, Prefect?"

"Never."

I seemed unlucky, and made haste again to shift the talk, quite sure that both clubs were known to one or another of my guests, and aware that my dinner had not been a complete success.

"Try this other Madeira," I said; "you may like it."

"None of us, it seems, appears to know much of your clubs," said the prefect, with a queer, cynic smile; "but there certainly is a famous club of thieves."

"Political, Prefect?" queried Merton in his languid after-dinner way of saying dubious things, pleased that social justice, kind to those

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

who wait, had given him the chance of retort.

The prefect smiled. "Merci, Monsieur—*Touché.*"

"Do they make ballads?" said De la Motte.

"They may."

"This club is said to be as old as François Villon," said Varin. "Whether or not they still have poet thieves, I cannot say."

"Or thieving poets," added Merton. "They all steal from one another."

I gladly welcomed this diversion of the talk, and, soon after, all except Blanchelande went away, gaily chaffing me about those wonderful clubs.

The count detained me a moment in the ante-chamber, and said, as we stood aside: "My uncle would not dine with Blanchelande, Greville. He is, as you know, a wild republican, and of late has been in a condition of senile irritability and, I think I said so, imprudent to the last degree."

"And so that was it. How strange! Good night," and I went back to Blanchelande.

As I sat down, he said: "Greville, do you



"I AM RATHER AN ASCENDANT THAN A DESCENDANT"

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

really want to hear more about those clubs? Of course, as you must have gathered, we are all cautious in our talk. In these days of suspicion and espionage we rarely refer elsewhere than in royalist circles to the Club of Ancestors, and never except among members to the Guillotine Club. You could not know that, and your curiosity was quite natural."

"Then all of you know of these organizations?"

"Oh, yes. There is a Club of Jacobins. I should not be surprised to learn that Varin was a member. We are less disposed to be secret. You heard his denial."

"Yes; and I was annoyed at the man's talk. One does sometimes make a mistake in mixing one's salad-dressing. That is Alphonse's wisdom. M. Varin will not be in my next salad."

Blanchelande laughed.

"The vinegar was certainly in excess."

"I may venture to ask if you are not of that Guillotine Club?"

"Oh, yes; as are many French gentlemen.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

While little is said of it, there is no nonsense, no Freemason business. It is merely a very exclusive society, designed to keep fresh certain memories."

"I should like to see these clubs."

"That may be possible for ours, impossible for the Jacobin. We now and then admit strangers not Frenchmen, and we once purposely invited the chief of police. We have every reason to be thought of as non-political; but nevertheless—However, leave it with me, and I will see what I can do to gratify your curiosity. It might interest you."

I thanked him, and we began to speak of other matters.

II

MY dinner was in October, and I heard no more until January 15, when Blanchelande called on me.

He said: "I have here an invitation for you to be present at the annual meeting of the Guillotine Club. Pray read it."

The President and Council of the Society of Ancestors will be honoured by the presence of Monsieur Greville on the 21st of January at half-after nine A. M. punctually.

"An unusual hour," said I.

"Yes; but there is a reason for it. I shall call for you in time. I ought to say that you will be so good as to wear evening dress, all black, with black necktie."

Somewhat surprised at these directions, I thanked him. As he was leaving, he said: "You know, my friend, how much I owe to you,

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

and I like, therefore, to say that this special invitation is unusual. It has been twice asked for in vain by—but no matter. You will learn at the meeting why I was able to secure it for you. I am sure that you will be interested.”

At nine, on January 21st, I was dressed as my friend had desired me to be. When Alphonse knew the evening before what I required, to my astonishment he said: “It is for the Royalist club. Monsieur should also have black shirt-studs and black gloves. I ventured to buy them this morning.”

“Very good,” I said. “Much obliged.” He evidently knew what was my errand, although of this I had said nothing. I had given up being amazed at my valet. I now supposed him to have known of the club through his police affiliations.

“Monsieur will not want me until evening?”

“No.”

“I have left the clothes for change, and the dinner dress as usual.”

“Thanks,” said I. “You may go.”

Presently I was with Blanchelande, and we



M. BLANCHELANDE

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

drove a long distance through the Rue Lafayette. We turned at last under an archway into the courtyard of what seemed to have been a large, two-story château. The street front was occupied by shops. The courtyard space seemed neglected, and there was a ruined fountain, long out of business. Two or more carriages came in behind us. We went up the steps under a crumbling scutcheon and through the doorway. A servant in black received our cards on a silver salver. As I looked up from the plate I saw that the attendant was my own valet, Alphonse. I was, of course, surprised, but neither he nor I gave any sign of recognition, and followed by several gentlemen in full mourning, we went up a wide stairway, past a second servant, to whom again we gave our cards.

Then we entered a large room where heavy curtains excluded the daylight. Numerous wax candles set in sconces afforded a scarce sufficient illumination, so that it was some time before I saw clearly enough to decide from the cupids and roses of the ceiling that I was in the

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

ball-room of what had been a suburban château of the time of the regency. There was on one side a dais with tables and chairs for the presiding officers, well lighted with large candelabra. Behind the dais two crossed flags draped with black bore the arms and lilies of the Bourbons.

As we moved into view, all present rose and bowed to Blanchelande, who, returning the salute, said to me, "Sit here," and went on to the dais, where he took the chair as presiding officer. Several minutes passed in silence, and then he said: "Close the doors. It is ten o'clock. There will be no more admissions."

During the interval of quiet, I had begun to use my eyes, and saw in the first row of chairs several whom I knew, and, not to my surprise, the Count de la Motte. As I leaned forward to look, I was sure that the recognition was mutual.

The absolute silence, the air of gravity, and the dark figures of, as I guessed, three-score gentlemen, set me to marveling. At this moment Blanchelande rose. He said: "I hereby

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

declare open upon this 21st day of January, 1864, the fiftieth annual meeting of the society of gentlemen members of whose families died by the guillotine. I have the honor to present as a guest M. Greville of the American Legation, invited for reasons satisfactory to the council. Gentlemen, M. Greville."

The entire assembly rose, bowed, and remained standing. I returned the courtesy. Blanchelande laid his watch on the table and waited. The stillness was complete.

In a low but distinct voice the president said: "As the grandson of Victor-André Blanchelande, sometime governor of St. Domingo, the first victim of the guillotine, on this 21st day of January I announce to you the approach of the hour of the murder of Louis XVI, King of France." He spoke slowly as he added, glancing at his watch: "Now the King ascends the scaffold." He paused. "Now the King kneels. Now"—and again he paused—"it is twenty minutes after ten o'clock. The King is dead."

There was a faint stir as of controlled emo-

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

tion, and I heard from all present the words, "God rest his soul!" For a moment there was silence and all resumed their seats.

Then Blanchelande said: "It is our custom to call next the roll of members, who will respond for those of their family who died by the guillotine."

"They will come forward in turn, and commemorate by their presence and their answers the unfailing remembrance by the gentlemen of France of those of their order who died for the cause of their rightful monarch. His Grace the secretary will now honor us by calling the roll."

What I next saw and heard impressed me as few scenes in my life have done. On the right of the president rose an archbishop in his full episcopal attire. In a clear voice he read from a roll in his hand, "M. Victor-André Blanchelande."

The president stood up. "I answer for my ancestor, the first victim of the guillotine, April 9, 1793."

As the roll went on with name after name



G. ...
2.

M. LE VICOMTE DE LAISNÉ

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

of the French *noblesse*, at each summons a man came forward and gave the date of the death and the name of some relative. I listened with intense interest and something like awe to this impressive ceremony so remote from the everyday life of gay Paris.

One old man murmured: "Le Marquis, la Marquise, et Mlle. de Beauchastel," and I heard, "Father, mother, sister, guillotined on the 3d, 5th, and 9th of May, 1793." Then with bent head he tottered away to his chair. And the list went on, with titles old in story, with names famous in history.

I heard De la Motte reply for his ancestor, and then another and another, while in the hush of the dimly lighted room the summoning voice of the prelate rose, or fell to low notes as something in the answers left him emotionally disturbed.

At the last he read, "M. le Vicomte de Laisné." An aged gentleman, very feeble and evidently blind, came forward, leaning on the arm of a younger man. His voice was scarce audible as he said, "I appear for Mlle. de Mar-

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

san, dead—” he hesitated—“dead on—” he seemed to have forgotten; it was painful—“dead on—on the 9th of the month Floréal, 1794.”

I understood the low murmur of pity and surprise. In this terrible recall of a day of sorrow he had stumbled in his failing memory upon the Revolutionary name of the month of May. A gentleman beside me said in a whisper: “He was to have married her. He is nearly a century old.” It seemed to bring very near to me this tragic history.

As I sat and now and again caught sound of the roar of traffic without, the complex note of the great city, my thoughts were disturbed by Blanchelande’s voice. “It is now time,” he said, “that we hold our private meeting and receive the report of the council. I must ask, therefore, that the guest who honors us with his presence will withdraw.” On this, again, all present stood up, and bowing to the chair and to the assembly, I left the room. At the foot of the stair I received from Alphonse my

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

hat and coat, and returned home to change my dress.

At breakfast next day I said: "I am much obliged, Alphonse, by what you said to me in regard to these clubs. It was well worth while to see that ceremony; but how do you chance to serve there?"

"It was not chance, Monsieur. My grandfather was the servant of the Baron de Lorme, and because he aided his master to escape was guillotined. The meetings are rare, and while I remain in France they will not interfere with my service."

I reassured him, and then said: "But what of the Jacobin Club? I should like to see it also."

Alphonse seemed disturbed. "They are not of monsieur's class. They would not interest him. It is not quite safe."

"I am not at all sure that it will not interest me. As to safety, nonsense! Come, now, how can I manage it?"

"But they admit no strangers."

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“You seem to know their ways.”

“Yes. With some years of police service, one learns many things; but this is impossible to be done.”

I was intent to learn something of this other club, and when I rode in the Bois that afternoon with De la Motte, I said: “What is known of this Club of Jacobins? I mentioned it the other day at dinner, and all of you shut up, as we say, like clams. There is such a club,” I persisted.

“Then you know, *mon ami*, as much of it as I do. What a charming mees! How well she rides!”

“Yes; an American,” I said, as I bowed to her. As we rode on I said, “Why were you all so silent about your Royalist club?”

“My dear Greville, we could not discuss it before Varin. He would not understand, or might have made himself, in fact did make himself, unpleasant. The club is rather a private association than an ordinary society, and the memories it consecrates and revives are just such as we do not talk of lightly even thus far

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

away from their realities. You must have seen how solemn a thing it was.”

“I did indeed. I shall never forget it. But about the Jacobin Club?”

“Oh, about that. There is such a club, but of it I know nothing except that it exists and that there is an old and serious feud between our society and this nest of Jacobins. You may be sure you will never see the inside of the Jacobins.”

“Indeed, I will bet you a dinner at Magny’s that I shall be present at a meeting of the Jacobin Club.”

“Done,” he said. “You are a very obstinate man. Well, the Corton Vieux is good at Magny’s. Shall we gallop?”

Two days later I said to Alphonse, “Is that Jacobin Club active?”

“Yes, of late, or so my cousin of the police tells me. It is an old society, and when I was on the force there was at the central bureau a list of its members. I was once ordered to shadow two of whom little was known. Why, under the empire, it is allowed at all, some one

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

in power knows. If monsieur is set on a difficult matter, I might mention that any very violent republican might assist."

I did not know any one to whom I could or would apply.

I had that day to see M. Blanchelande, who, like me, was boldly buying our government bonds, much to his future profit. After a word about a recent contract and mode of shipment, I said how profoundly impressed I had been by the tragic roll-call I had heard. Then I added, "About that Jacobin Club, I should like to see it. I have a bet with M. de la Motte that I shall visit that club."

"You may as well pay. If you are in earnest, ask M. Granson, La Motte's uncle. He is a silly, old, maundering republican. He is just as like as not to be a member; but keep me out of the matter, and stay out yourself, my friend."

"Of course I shall not use your name; and as for myself, I do not see what risk I run."

"Only such risks as a diplomatist ought not to run. None of your legation is altogether

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

persona grata. A word from the police, and you may be sent home, to my regret."

He was quite right, but curiosity is with me an appetite which is not very respectful of advice. I resolved to see M. Granson.

When I found the old gentleman in question at his apartments, I saw at once that, as his nephew, the count, had told me, he was approaching his dotage. I lost no time, but said, "M. Granson, you are, I believe, a prominent member of the Club of Jacobins." I supposed that he would deny it.

"I am," he said; "I am proud to say I am. Some day it will make itself felt."

"I should like to see this club."

"See it, Monsieur—see it? You never can, unless you are a Jacobin." He cackled thin, aged laughter.

Then I said, seeing a way open, "I am not a Jacobin, but my grandfather was."

"What! How can that be?" He laid down the paper-cutter with which he had been toying, and sat up in his chair, attentive.

"Yes," said I; "in 1792 there were twenty

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

Jacobin Clubs in America. One, in Charleston, South Carolina, was affiliated with the Jacobin Club of Paris. My grandfather lived for a time in Charleston, and was a member of this club." I did not say that his Federalist sons were by no means proud of it. "I have at home in America his certificate of membership."

He was at once enthusiastic. "Then, *mon ami*, it may be done. The case, your case is unique. Leave it with me. I shall fail, I fear, but I have influence, great influence. I gladly do much to sustain the club; and to feel that we have allies in America is most helpful. We must correspond with that club."

I said, with all the gravity I could command, that just now, in this year 1864, it would be difficult; that we had found it as yet hard to get our own mail into Charleston, on account of certain prejudices.

This seemed to revive his mind, for he returned: "Oh, yes. Now I remember—a good joke that. Prejudices! You shall hear soon."



AN ARCHBISHOP IN HIS FULL EPISCOPAL ATTIRE

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

I went away, leaving him to consider the joke with his meek smile of aging mirth. The red eyes, the uncertainly balanced head, the look of senile, complacent satisfaction, I carried away as a momentary memory, and, too, some unpleasant doubt concerning the propriety of using the weakness of a man in his condition in order to satisfy mere curiosity.

I heard no further until, in February, I received this letter:

Pluviose 9.

DEAR CITIZEN:

I have succeeded. Your claim to be of us is admitted, and excited great interest. I vouched with pleasure for your Jacobin descent. I regret that you were not with us at our annual meeting on the second of the month of Pluviose, being January 21st. We celebrate that as the day when justice was done upon Louis Capet, the enemy of the republic. On the 11th of March I shall call for you at eleven in the morning.

Yours, etc.,

Eugène Granson.

There was in this letter enough cause for reflection. Had I known at the time that this club was attracting the closer attention of the

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

police, I might have taken Blanchelande's advice, and hesitated in regard to attending a meeting. I did accept, however, and out of this arose some unlooked-for consequences.

III

AN omnibus took M. Granson and me far into the Quartier St. Denis. Alighting, we passed through a small tobacco shop into a walled space behind it. Thence we entered an unused factory, where, at the foot of the stairs, stood two persons in ordinary dress. One, to my surprise, was an *avocat* used at times by our own legation. He made no sign of recognition. My companion said: "This is M. Greville. Permit him to pass." They made way in silence. The second man gave us each a tricolored cockade, which, imitating Granson, I set on my coat.

With other generally well-dressed persons we went up-stairs, Granson saying to me, "The password is Robespierre." I heard it with a sudden sense of the quality of the club. At a door on the second floor a plainly clad man stopped us. "The word," he said.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“Robespierre,” replied Granson. I repeated it.

“Couthon,” returned the guard. “Pass on.”

I remembered to have read of Couthon as one of the most atrociously cruel of the Revolutionists.

At once we were in a large, plain, well-lighted room with many windows. Here were seated quite a hundred men, not any, I thought, of the mechanic class. One or two faces I had seen before. It was plain, however, that it was neither a simple bourgeois assembly nor made up of such as I expected to see.

Over the seat of the president was the tricolor and the red cap of the old republic. I sat down with Granson and looked about me. The president took his chair, and I knew him at once as a noted republican. He said, “Call the roll.” A secretary did so, and as one after another responded I recognized some as opponents of the empire and wondered that they were thus allowed to meet. In fact, it was a registered club, as it had to be, but un-

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

der the name of the Historical Society. That it had ulterior purposes I was sure.

My next surprise followed upon the announcement of my presence and of my election as an honorary member by the council, the name of my voucher, and of my claim to be a Jacobin. It excited much attention, as evidently unusual.

“Citizen Greville,” said the president, “is therefore a non-resident honorary member.” A member, indeed! I was anything but pleased. It was vain to remonstrate. I kept my seat, and no more seemed to be expected of me. There were no such courtesies as in the Royalist club.

“Very gratifying,” murmured Granson. “All here, or nearly all, are descendants of the men of the Revolution. I congratulate you.”

The president, still standing, said: “The latest newly elected member, Citizen Joseph, will now rise. Citizen Joseph. His sponsor is Citizen Granson.”

Granson looked a little bewildered as he

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

stood up and said: "I have paid his dues for him, but, to his regret, he is not able to attend to-day. He will come to the next meeting, this Citizen Joseph." He chuckled feebly as he sat down.

"Citizen Joseph, the last elected member, is excused," said the president. "He must be present at the next meeting."

"Oh, he will come," said Granson.

The president then went on at some length to say there was other business, and that he had learned with concern that the police were giving too much attention to the club. He therefore warned all present to be cautious, and said that the council would as usual conduct such affairs as needed immediate attention. The club would not meet for some time, and would then be called by trusty messengers to reassemble in another place. Men near me whispered to one another, and seemed disturbed by this announcement. An adjournment was moved and there was evidently a desire to get away.

Granson went with me to the courtyard,

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

where he detained me while he talked loudly of matters concerning which prudent people in those days did not talk at all. At last, while trying to release myself on the plea of an engagement, he said to me, "Did you hear about Citizen Joseph? I thought you would know."

"How should I?"

"Ask him, Citizen; ask him." I had no least idea of what he meant, but concluding that the excitement of the meeting had entirely upset an ill-balanced mind, I said, "Adieu, Monsieur."

"*A bas les Messieurs!*" he cried after me. "Citizen, congratulate Citizen Joseph."

Looking back, I saw the old man shaking with rhythmic giggling, an unwholesome parody of healthy laughter.

As the Jacobins passed out, he went on talking. One or two smiled, but others, ill pleased, looked at him gravely. As for myself, I felt that I had paid too much for the gratification of a curiosity without reasonable cause.

Some days went by before there were any sequels to my recently acquired knowledge of

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

clubs. Meanwhile my valet was in an unusual condition of rather melancholy silence.

One day, while I was eating my breakfast, Alphonse said, "Monsieur will excuse me, but he has seen the Club of Jacobins."

"How do you know that?"

"Because monsieur has ceased to talk of it, and because, also, he was seen by the police to enter with M. Granson."

I did not like it. "Here," thought I, "is consequence number one." "Oh, is that all?" I remarked lightly.

"No, Monsieur. My cousin of the police, who was to report on the meeting, has lost his memory, and monsieur has unfortunately mislaid three napoleons."

"Take them out of my porte-monnaie there on the desk."

"Thanks, sare." He now and then ventured upon English. "May I beg monsieur to be satisfied and go no more to such clubs? Monsieur is aware that I am soon to marry and go to America. The coming of marriage does sober a man, and I know not who will care for

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

—monsieur when I leave him to the Captain Merton, who is a boy for mischief.”

When Alphonse was serious, he stayed behind my chair; when he became humorous, he moved into view.

I said that he might be at ease; that for a time at least I had had enough of clubs, and not even a marriage club would tempt me.

“Ah,” he laughed, “the Two Club—the marriage club.” And now he came around the table with some manual excuse of his perfect service. “I have given up the police, Monsieur. Of course I reported monsieur’s visit at the Society of Ancestors. It was of no moment. Now I give up. I have resigned. Marriage is quite police enough for me. The dear women, are they not all spies?” And then in his odd English he added, “It gives to think, Monsieur.”

“Certainly,” I said. “Circumstances?”

“Ah, since I had the honor to rob a house with monsieur, I use not any more that good word which so much explains. I use it no more. I am become exact.”

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

"There is the bell," I said.

"*Dame!* It is the Captain Merton. First he skirmishes with the bell, then it is war, and the apartment resounds. I go."

The American entered with M. de la Motte, Merton with his queer look of latent joy at having found something worthy of attention in the life he called dull. The French officer's face had lost its constant smile.

"You are late if you want breakfast," I said.

"No," said Merton, as he stood rolling a cigarette; "our friend De la Motte is in trouble. I could dispose of it easily, but for him, as he sees it, it is more than grave, and I have brought him here that we might consider the matter from his point of view."

"Very good," I said; "sit down. I am due at the legation at noon. Until then I am yours."

"Go on and tell him," said Merton.

De la Motte, declining a cigar, said: "You who are my friend know of my engagement to Mlle. Granson, my cousin. You know, too, her father, who we think is becoming insane

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

and giving quite too much money to some low kind of democratic club."

"Possibly Jacobin," I said gaily.

"Ah, my bet."

"Yes, I went there with M. Granson."

"Did you? Indeed!" Then he paused.

"At your service," I said. "Go on."

"My uncle told me to-day with the delight of a child that he had had me elected a member of his *sacré* Jacobin Club, had generously paid my dues, and expected me to attend their next meeting."

"Good heavens!" I said.

"Yes; if it is known, I am ruined. I, an officer of the Emperor's Guard, and my aunt the marquise, whose heir I am! When I said these obvious things to this old fool, he said of course he could n't think of making trouble: I was quite safe: he had nominated me by my baptismal name."

"What!" I exclaimed.

"Ah, *mon ami* Greville, behold me as Citizen Joseph, a Jacobin."

Then I remembered. This club business

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

was to be lasting; my own case was bad enough.

"I am domiciled, it seems. He was cunning, and gave my address as No. 9, rue de Beauvière, his own hôtel. It is atrocious, hideous!—this crazy old man and his Jacobin Club."

"Yes, I was there," I returned.

"You really saw this den of animals?"

"Yes, I did. I won my bet, and I am sorry I did. I heard this feeble old man, your uncle, say M. Joseph could not be present, but at another meeting would have the honor."

"*Nom de chien*, honor! I told him I never would go, that it is a fraud. He was furious. Good-by to everything. It is adieu to my income and to my aunt's estate and my cousin."

The note of despair in the voice of a young, handsome, gallant man was too much for Merton's social charity. "Confound it, man," he cried, as he rose to give emphasis to his advice, "what kind of people are you in France? Run away with the girl. Give up this Bonaparte service. Go to America. Make a fortune." It was impossible not to laugh, and we did, but

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

Merton said indignantly: "I am in earnest. I don't jest about women. It seems to me all very simple."

"Simple!" said De la Motte. "*Ma foi*, is it, indeed. The old man will talk. A single careless word, my real name, and no one will believe that M. Joseph is not a safe cover willingly assumed. It is ruin—ruin."

I said to Merton: "Our friend is right. He is in a false position and, as a member of the Guillotine Club, he is in a doubly false situation. I may as well tell you that the police are just now uneasy about this Jacobin Club, or so I hear."

"Alphonse?" queried Merton.

"Yes, Alphonse."

"I wish they might be more attentive," returned Merton. "That would burst the whole circus. We came to consult you, Greville; but really I see nothing to do except to wait."

"No; you are right. There will be no meeting for months, and before that the police may 'call them,' as we say at home."

"It is blissfully funny," laughed Merton.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

There was no fun in it for the young count. He loved the cavalry, the girl, and his aunt's estate. All three were in peril. "I wish some one would shoot me," he said.

"Come over and join our cavalry. You will have a fair chance of being shot."

"I may," said the count, and went away despondent, leaving us alone.

"He is a trifle disgusting, that young man," said the captain. "He comes to see me every day or two and wants advice. I like him, but one can't vary the dose of advice, and so, to have a consulting doctor, I brought him to you, and now you also tell him to wait."

"What else is there? It is rather hard."

"Oh, worse than hard. The old man actually told him that he, De la Motte, had authorized him to nominate him as M. Joseph. It is of course a delusory belief on the part of an insane, cunning old man with an inventive memory—"

"Inventive memory is good," I said. "What our friend dreads, what most Frenchmen

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

would fear, is the laughter of Paris, and Paris would laugh.”

For two days I was busy at the legation; then came a note.

I must see you to-night. Will call with the count at ten. There is a delightful tangle.

Yours,

Arthur Merton.

IV.

AT the time named, my two friends appeared. The count sat down, saying, "Be so good as to tell M. Greville the new and hopeless situation in which my uncle's insane folly has placed me."

I fancied that the captain rather enjoyed the task thus assigned. "I can make it short."

"Not too short," I said.

"Well, it's ancient history. Somewhere about 1814 the Royalists founded this Society of Ancestors. How could there be a Society of Ancestors? Ghosts of the guillotine it seems. Well, soon afterward, the descendants of Jacobins must have a club. The Royalists met on the day of the death of Louis XVI. Messieurs the Jacobins chose that day to rejoice. This got out. There was a challenge, and some one killed, which did not make for

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

peace. Then other duels resulted. Somehow without being accepted as part of the societies' duties, there grew up the lovely custom of limiting this permanent row to one encounter annually. Then for years this beautiful custom lapsed, or the two clubs at times fell away, and then again became lively, when, as of late, some outside social difference or some word of Jacobin insult revived the custom. Interesting, is n't it?"

"How amazing," I said, "and how well guarded!"

"Yes, with extreme care. Now for a year or two there have been these singular duels; but as neither club desires to be much *en évidence*, they are formally managed and arranged, but have been of late serious pistol affairs. Is n't it splendid?"

"It is stupid nonsense," I replied.

"Wait a little. There is more and better."

"*Mon Dieu*, better!" groaned the count. "He said better! This morning my Uncle Granson forwarded to me this official letter, addressed to M. Joseph. I presume, as it was

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

not open, that he does not know of its contents. Now, read that.”

“It is immense,” murmured my captain. “No adjective describes it.”

His unconcealed joy over the situation evidently annoyed the man most concerned. “Oh, read it! Read it!” he exclaimed. I did.

The Council of the Club of the Jacobins informs Citizen Joseph that, in accordance with custom, as the last-elected Jacobin, he will arrange a non-political occasion of insult to enable him as our representative, to meet the citizen named in the sealed inclosure from the challenging Society of the Guillotine. Citizen Joseph will without delay contribute whatever is needed to bring about a hostile meeting. His name and address have as a matter of form been sent to the secretary of the Society of the Guillotine.

“It’s great,” cried Merton; “but wait till you hear the rest. It is complete. Nothing like it ever happened since Chance the banker first dealt the fate cards to man.”

I laughed. “Elaborate description that, a little mixed—chance and fate.”

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“Tried it on De la Motte. He was not in an appreciative mood. But how neat it is, how civilized—the situation, not my poetry! Great Scott! Greville, think of it! You see De la Motte—I beg your pardon, M. Joseph—is to call on the Royalist challenger, somehow insult him, and get up a mock appetite for killing a man with whom he has no quarrel. That’s bad enough, but the sequel! Good heavens! Count, don’t look so confoundedly done for! How can I help laughing, Greville? Now read this other note.”

I did. It ran thus:

The gentlemen of the Society of the Guillotine learn that the persons who constitute your club continue to insult the memory of His Sacred Majesty, Louis XVI, foully murdered, by persistently rejoicing on the anniversary of his death. They have accordingly appointed by lot a gentleman who will represent the honor of the gentlemen of France, and so arrange as to secure the needed opportunity of meeting the representative named in your inclosure. This, our note we trust, will be forwarded by you to the person who acts for you. The gentleman who acts for the Society of the Guillotine is the Count Louis Joseph de

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

la Motte, Captain of Cavalry in the Imperial Guard, No. 7, rue d'Alger, who is duly instructed as to meeting M. Joseph.

The captain checked my cry of amazement. "Just wait a little. Let's have all the documents. Here is the direct personal letter—our friend received to-day from this other society, indorsed, '*Note carefully, and burn this*'—

The President and Council of the Society of the Guillotine confide to you, the Count de la Motte, the honor determined by lot of arranging a hostile meeting with the person named in the letter of the Club of Jacobins. As it is desired that, except in the councils, this matter should not be known as other than of personal origin, you will so arrange within a month as to avoid the appearance of bringing into the matter either of the clubs. As usual, both parties will choose their seconds outside of the members.

Louis de La Tour,
Secretary.

For God and the King.

For a moment I was confused by the complexity of the thing, and could only contribute exclamations, while De la Motte sat looking from one to the other of his friends, and Merton gave way to such laughter as few men

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

laugh. At last I checked him, seeing how serious it all was for the young count.

“Oh, don’t, Greville!” exclaimed the American. “De la Motte and I have talked this thing dead. He will tell you I never so much as smiled. But now—now I must have my laugh out, man, if I am to be of any use. It is like suppressed gout, fatal.”

“I find it,” I said, “too strange for laughter.”

“Yes, yes. But, heavens! De la Motte, don’t look as if your mother-in-law was dead. It is comic-opera, melodrama—ripe mellow, indeed. Have you quite taken it in, Greville? Here is one man whom the Puck called Chance makes two men. These two men, who are one man, are each to insult and kill one man, who is two men. Come, who shall begin? It is tragic. You are to have a duel with yourself. You have not even the privilege of suicide; a duel implies two.”

“I shall end with killing myself.”

“Nonsense!” said I. “But now let us seriously consider how to get you out of this affair.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

Let me hear, De la Motte, how it looks to you. Of course, it is sure so far that neither club knows who M. Joseph is."

"Yes, as yet—as yet. The only ray of comfort is that my uncle, who did not know of these last challenges when he nominated me, is now wild with terror lest I shall be killed, and has gone out of town to his vineyards in the South. Of course the two councils are prudently silent, as is their custom." The count seemed relieved at being taken seriously.

"Go on," said Merton. "Get Greville inside this maze, and see how he can find a way out. I can't. I end by laughing. I should laugh if I were to be married. Go on."

The count made a weak attempt to smile. "My aunt would not leave me a penny if she knew I were—ah, *mon Dieu!*—a Jacobin. My uncle is appalled into silence. I cannot resign from either club without disgrace. I cannot explain without both clubs feeling insulted. I should have a dozen affairs on my hands. I can't—I can't—Diable! How can M. Joseph insult the Count de la Motte? Or I insult me?

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

It is like some maddening dream." He laughed and seemed to me a trifle hysterical.

"Where now is the advice?" said Merton to me.

"Upon my word, it is nowhere."

De la Motte sat still, regarding with a kind of malignant satisfaction the obvious fact that I had, like Merton himself, been beaten by the remorseless logic of the situation. I considered how it would answer to do this or that. To each suggestion there was a sufficing negative. At last I said: "Suppose you do nothing, and your month goes by. What then?"

"Both clubs would seek explanations. I—what can I—what could I say?"

"It is bewildering," I said. "Is it permitted to speak of this to M. Blanchelande?"

"Oh, never. That is not to be thought of." As we talked over this amazing situation, Captain Merton sat silent at my desk, smoking, and seemed to me to be stating the case in equations. In fact he was merely yielding to one of the habits into which thinking men fall while deeply cogitating, and was idly writing

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

numbers here and there on the page of a blotter. At last he threw down the pencil and swinging round said with decision, "If I were in this trap, I should tell the whole pack of fools to go to—well, Hades."

"Heroic American commonplace," said I. "We are in France."

"So it seems. It is as interesting as a charade. These societies have no relation that is not hostile, Count?"

"None, of course. Absolutely none."

"Very good. Let M. Joseph report to the Jacobins that having personally insulted his chosen antagonist, that is you, he cannot get a fight out of him. You see, De la Motte, you have only to call yourself a fool, or worse, which you at least may feel at liberty to do. You can also write to the other fellows, the Royalists, that so far you have been quite unable to find the person whose name as respondent has been sent to you by the Jacobin Club, with a false address. All this is true. Anything," said Merton, "to gain time."

I laughed great laughter at the new, doubly

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

comic situation this would create, while the captain insisted that it would let our man out, and fill both clubs with joy at the humiliation presumably inflicted on their hereditary foes. "There, that is all of my wisdom," said the American. "A cigar, please."

The count's look of puzzled earnestness evidently amused my captain, for whom it was all a gigantic joke, and of course also a matter which might at any time become grave—without which possibility even the humor would for him have lacked something.

We talked it over endlessly, my own advice being to confess to both councils in confidence. To this neither De la Motte nor Merton would listen. Finally we decided to send the two letters. They were composed with care and duly delivered. Any replies for the count were to be sent by the council of the Society of Ancestors to my care as his second, and letters to M. Joseph from the Jacobins were to be called for at M. Granson's. The American captain continuously enjoyed the new situation, and so having played our cards, we waited.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

The captain said to me one night,—it was late, I remember,—“I have found Paris pretty slow since we closed out that diplomatic adventure, and really I have seen until now nothing to equal our Porthos and Aramis. Will they answer one another or the count?”

As we talked, De la Motte came in. He was always coming in just now. Overhearing us, he said: “I can gratify your curiosity. Read that.”

THE CLUB OF THE JACOBINS

Citizen Joseph is informed that this is not the only occasion when the Royalists have shown cowardice. The citizen will be further advised. Caution is needful, as the police are troubling the Jacobin Club.

“So I, the Count de la Motte, am a coward! *Mon Dieu!*” said he.

“On your own evidence,” laughed Merton. “It gets funnier every minute. To-day it does appear to have reached the earthly maximum of the droll. To-morrow it will be somewhere in the fourth dimension of the comic. If you

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

could only just laugh at it, Count, you would feel better."

"I find it anything but laughable," said the count.

"Well," I said, "you are right; it is not altogether a mere jest of fate. To-day it is comic enough, to-morrow we may find it anything but amusing."

"What of the other club?" asked Merton.

"I have here," I replied, "the letter from the Ancestors sent to my care. Let us hear it."

De la Motte opened it, and read it aloud:

The Secretary of the Society of Ancestors has received the letter of the Count de la Motte. The council has sent to the Jacobin Club a statement of the contents with, as usual, no mention of names. Their council state in a note that you, Monsieur, have been grossly insulted, and will not fight, of course a lie which you will deal with to your satisfaction when you are able to discover this man.

"What a delicious tangle!" said Merton. "What next? If I am correct, the Jacobins are a bit uneasy because of the police. Yes.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

That was plain. Just wait a little." Merton reflected in silence, the count studying him with some confidence that he would find an exit from this maze. At last the American officer said decisively, "We want time, but how to get it?"

"Why time?" I asked.

"Because—well, something may cause this Jacobin Club to be rounded up. Nothing is more likely or—by Jove! De la Motte, here's a priceless idea: you could get smallpox or typhoid fever—be in bed a month."

"What, I? Back out? Avoid a fight—"

"What, with yourself, De la Motte? You ought to, you must, in some decent way, disappear for a few weeks."

"I ought to disappear forever or kill somebody. Here is my own club thinking me—oh—me, M. Joseph, afraid, and that club of vermin believes that I, the Count de la Motte, am a coward, and—I—I—I think I shall go mad."

"That would perhaps, answer," said Merton, "if well managed, but the fun would be at an end. And there would have to be an ex-

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

planation, the thing of all others to avoid. Disappear, my dear friend.”

The count fell back in his chair, the figure of despair. “How can I? Is it I, M. Joseph, or De la Motte, who is to disappear? *Mon Dieu!*”

We continued our talk after he left us. “You are right, Merton, about the police,” I said. “Blanchelande was here to-day, and tells me the Guillotine Society has been warned, whatever that may mean.”

“Humph!” said Merton, “is that so? By Jove! I mean to see this game played out.”

“Of course; and we must somehow get our friend out of his scrape. But why, Merton, are you so incautious? Alphonse has been in and out, and you go on talking as if we were discussing a play at the theater.”

“My dear Greville, you may be sure that fellow knows all about it. The other business was far more serious, and you know how useful Alphonse was. I want to talk to him. Oh, not now. Send him to me at ten to-morrow.”

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“Yes, if you wish it.” I had my doubts concerning this consultation. The captain’s methods were, as I knew, somewhat radical. Before we parted, he asked in a casual way if there had been any personal pledges exacted of those present at either club. I said no.

“I—see. The police will, I trust, relieve us; but time is what is needed. Don’t forget Alphonse. I wonder what the next act will be—‘How to become Twins’? Good-by.”

V

AFTER breakfast the next day I saw nothing of my valet until evening. He came in, arranged my clothes, and disappeared. At breakfast the following day I thought it well to investigate.

“So you saw the captain, Alphonse? He kept you busy all day, I presume.”

“Yes, Monsieur. He is in a very good humor, as he was that night in the rain. Well, he told me that I knew all about this affair of M. the Count de la Motte. I could but say the captain has an open-air voice, very good for cavalry orders, easy to hear.”

“Well?”

“He said he would tell me the whole business, if it was not clear to me. I said it was not needed. Then he said the Jacobin Club was objectionable; he was informed it would have to meet elsewhere. If the police knew

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

that— You see, Monsieur, the captain is an innocent person. If he had known that I had a cousin on the police, he would not have said such things. But you see, he has a confidence in human nature, and is of a liberal nature, a thing most agreeable to my cousin.”

The valet’s face was as a mask. What else passed between the captain and this delightful, trustworthy scamp I desired not to know.

After a brief silence he added, “It may be weeks.”

“What else?”

“Oh, nothing, Monsieur.”

As the days of the next week went by, De la Motte uneasily shuttle-cocked, as Merton said, between our rooms until I, believing the thing at an end, was rather bored.

On Saturday I heard Merton’s matchless laughter as returning from the Odéon I entered my rooms. He was alone.

“Well,” I said, “what now?” Few men laugh outright when alone. “What’s up now?”

“Oh, it is becoming sweetly simple. The

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

Jacobins desire M. Joseph to make the necessary insult physically such as he may find agreeably productive of a row. I like the way they put it. The Royalists do not report except to say they have again written, denying the slander concerning their man. Both clubs consider some abrupt and specific action desirable. It is a sort of mutual hornet's nest, both swarms furious. This young fellow is in a state of panic. He will presently do something rash. I see a rather carefully worded article in 'Le Temps' about clubs and secret societies."

"Well," I said, "I am getting rather bored with these societies and our hopeless young count. Not the ingenuity of Dumas could answer these last notes. He is at his wit's end."

"There is more end to mine," said Merton, "and to tell you the truth, in this slow town I am enjoying the position of counselor in this mess. Are you going to Baron St. Pierre's this afternoon?"

"Yes," said I. "I will call for you."

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“Do,” he returned. “All of the best fencers in Paris will be there. We are to play our club against the army men.” Since his duel with Porthos, a passionate lover of the foil, he had become of unusual competence.

“Will De la Motte be there?” he added.

“Yes, he is sure to be.”

A gayer scene than the garden back of the baron’s château on this sunny afternoon could not be found. Welcomed by the host in the house, we passed out into and through the garden. Beyond it, within a semicircle of tall box, was a grassy space, and about it were chairs and little tables with refreshments. The scene was gay with undress uniforms and well-clad men, devotees of the foil.

De la Motte and others spoke to us as we strolled about and watched the pairs of fencers on the green. About four, we sat down and saw with interest the prearranged matches. Before five o’clock the army had lost the match. Bets were paid and gay challenges given and accepted, the temporary judges, of whom De

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

la Motte was one, deciding as to the winners in these manly games.

Then, to my amusement, I saw the American captain's athletic figure matched against our old acquaintance the colonel—Aramis, as we called him. He was well known to me as one of the best blades in France, but the American was younger and of amazing quickness. I saw the couple engage and saw, too, very soon that on the part of Aramis there was some vexed remembrance of an unpleasant past. The button on the foil does not insure good temper, and presently I observed, as did other experts, that both men were too much in earnest. As they fell back after a bout, the French gentleman a little flushed, the captain smiling, something which I did not hear was said by De la Motte about the match. I understood him to have decided a disputed point in favor of the French colonel.

To the amazement of all within earshot, Captain Merton said abruptly in a loud voice, "That is not true." Had we been alone, a

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

word about hasty speech and an apology would have settled the matter; but here, overheard by a group of brother-officers, the reply was unavoidable. De la Motte went up to Merton and said with quiet courtesy, "I may, indeed, I surely have misunderstood your words. An apology—the simplest will answer, a word—"

"I do not make apologies."

There was a murmur of disapprobation, while the captain, entirely undisturbed, stood still. When the unfortunate reply to De la Motte's appeal was made, I hurriedly left a group, seeing Merton as it were without the support he certainly did not deserve. "This way," I said to him, drawing him aside. "Cannot this be helped? It is easy to end it; a word will answer. You have both given such proofs of courage as will quiet criticism."

"My dear Greville, it is going to be helped. I shall have no occasion to have made my will. Droll, is n't it? Fourth act."

I neither liked nor understood it. I made no rejoinder, for now the reasonable counsel of postponement having failed, and the

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

younger men and the count insisting on immediate action, his seconds, Major Leuret and the baron, asked who were Captain Merton's friends. The American captain turned to me at once, and then, to my astonishment, to Aramis, who accepted. Amid the ominous silence which fell on this gay crowd, I had a word with my principal, asking for instructions.

"No apology," said he to me sternly, "and swords, as of course we have the choice of weapons."

With the other seconds I went into the château. No attempt at a peaceable ending was even hinted. My proposal of swords was accepted, and weapons were selected from Baron St. Pierre's armory. I was distressed beyond measure, because not only were both men my friends, but I felt ashamed of the behavior of Merton, whose courteous ways had everywhere made him a favorite.

As I came out with the dueling-swords under my arm, every one drew back, and the voices fell away. The two men stripped to the waist

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

turned toward us. The American was quiet and smiled faintly as he received his blade. I thought De la Motte looked uneasy and a little flushed. It seemed to me a most outrageous affair.

Then Major Leuret and I took each a sword and stepped aside. The baron, turning, said to his guests, "Now, gentlemen, I need not ask for absolute silence."

The major said: "En garde, messieurs. Allez!"

De la Motte attacked with instant fury and the extreme of imprudence. Merton was cool, careful, and watchful. I had become expert with the foil, and knew very quickly that he was not using his advantages. He was in splendid condition, and the other man was clearly not so, and began at the close of the second bout to show signs of fatigue.

The captain parried in tierce, and, riposting, to speak technically, thrust quickly, his sword passing through the outside of the count's right arm below the shoulder. The count's sword dropped, hanging from his limp hand,



"EN GARDE, MESSIEURS"

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

the blood running freely down his bare arm as he stood awaiting our decision, flushed, panting, and looking from one to the other.

The silence was unbroken as De Leuret called a regimental surgeon, who put on a temporary dressing and said, as he turned to us, a few words which forced us as the seconds to conclude the affair at an end.

De la Motte went away with the surgeon and his major. I said to Merton, "We had better go."

"Of course I only waited for you to give the signal." With this he said in passing a word of thanks to the colonel we called Aramis, and, taking my arm, walked across the garden through groups of gentlemen, who ceased to speak as we approached, and were evidently by no means pleased with my principal. He went with me quietly, not the least disturbed. At the door he shook hands with the baron, saying to me as we passed out: "Your rooms, Greville. I want to talk to you." I saw that he did not wish to speak for a time, and although I was indignant at his loss of temper

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

and what it had cost, I held my tongue until we were seated in my salon. Then I said, "Why did you of all men lose your temper and insult that good fellow?"

"Well, now, Greville, for an American I did expect something better of you."

"What do you mean?"

"Yesterday these cursed Jacobins sent M. Joseph a statement to the effect that his report of having insulted his Royalist was denied, and he must at once proceed to extremities or explain to the council. This morning the Guillotine Club informed him that he was invited to state to M. Blanchelande what further had passed between him and the lying Jacobin. We were thus invited to explode comic fireworks for Paris."

"Well," I said, "what has all this got to do with your very unpleasant and needless quarrel?"

"Unpleasant, certainly. Needless? No. The man is half-crazy. He can't kick himself. These two fool clubs have 'called him,' and he holds no hand. Oh, I beg your pardon;

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

he has two of a kind, after a fashion, much of a kind. Jolly idea. You are not usually slow. For a little sword-wound this gentleman is out of a ruinous scrape."

"But, Merton, it was outrageous."

"Oh, perhaps; but now a note to Blanchelande from you as second will satisfy the Ancestors that the Count de la Motte is off the list of possible duelists for a good while to come. As for the Jacobins, I do not know. My hope lies with Alphonse and the police. You were rather full in your revelations to me."

"But you did not—"

"Yes, I did. Where the deuce are your cigarettes? I must see De la Motte, and soon."

"See him! He will never forgive you."

"Then he will be a fool and an ungrateful fool. But see him yourself and set his mind at ease. Now, don't look at me that way. Was n't it delightful? Could n't negotiate smallpox; had to take next best."

I fell back in my chair. He was right, of

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

course. The audacity of the thing, the cool adjustment of a dreadful difficulty by means like these, the risks, the opprobrium caused by seeming ill temper and insult, I do not think troubled the captain for a moment.

He said, "You think it abominable."

"Frankly, yes. I do."

"Well, put it the other way. You were at the end of your resources, I almost, and this man half-crazed. I do a minor surgical operation, and presto! the patient is cured. At all events, we gain time. The fact is, Greville, you are cross on account of my apparent behavior. Now I must go; but if any one—"

"Oh, by George! no more duels."

"Well, let them rage. Good-by."

I inquired next day for De la Motte, and learned that he was doing well, but declined to see me. Two days later I called, and was so persistent that he sent me word that I might come up to his room. His apartments were in a small hotel in the rue d'Alger and were very modest and simple. As I approached his bedside, he said: "You have forced me to see

Missing Page

Missing Page

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

you, but why, Monsieur, I cannot comprehend. I beg of you to be brief. Pray be seated."

"I came," said I, "because as your friend and Captain Merton's some explanation—"

He broke in angrily. "Some explanation, Monsieur? A man insults me as if with intention, and presents me, besides, with this *sacré* wound. I had no idea the thing hurt so much." There was a good deal of the boy about this very pleasant young soldier. "*Dame!*" and he groaned.

"But, my dear Count, did it never occur to you that what you desired, that some one would shoot you, has virtually come about? I mean that you are literally *hors de combat* for months, and that a note to M. Blanchelande from me will relieve you of the necessity of kicking M. Joseph or explaining what you can't explain."

"*Mon Dieu*, that is so. I thought of that last night."

"Might you not also have realized that for a trivial wound—"

"Trivial! I wish you had it. I can't turn

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

over on that side, and I always sleep on my right side." Then I laughed, and so did he.

"Trivial, I insist. For a slight wound, you have escaped being the jest of every club and gazette in Paris as the man who was two men and was expected to kick himself. Some clever brute would make a neat little *lever de rideau* for the Odéon—"

"I would kill him."

"You can't kill all Paris when it laughs unanimately."

He groaned. "Excuse me, that shoulder!"

"Why," said I, "do you suppose a courteous, honorable man doubted your word, your decision, so—well, so brutally and with no reason to do so."

"Lost his temper, I presume."

"What, this man? Oh, no. And he might have ended your duel easily three or four times. You are no match for him. He played with you."

"*Sacré!* But why?"

"Perhaps he meant to do you the friendly

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

service of presenting you with three weeks in bed."

"Incredible."

"But true. That man is your friend."

"*Mon Dieu!* Is this really so? What a man! Has he said so? Come, honestly?"

"Yes."

"You Americans are singular people."

"You have a slight wound. He has more or less accepted in your service the consequences of what he said to you in the garden. He neither can nor will explain to these gentlemen. To do so would be impossible. Now, who is the worse wounded, you, his friend, or he?"

The count was silent. "Any arrangement with you for a mock duel would have been for gentlemen out of the question. He took the risks for himself and you. No, do not answer me, but read this letter from Merton."

"Have the kindness to open it for me."

I did so, and gave it to him. I had already seen it. There were two notes:

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

MY DEAR FRIEND: We were at a crisis, and I took the one way to get you over it. You could not sham sick or explain or, in fact, do anything. You must forgive me, and use as seems best the inclosed letter.

Yours truly,

Arthur Merton.

The other note ran thus:

MY DEAR COUNT: I beg of you to receive my most humble apology for my display of bad temper and to express my regret at the consequences. You are at liberty to show this to any of the gentlemen who were present. I have already apologized to the baron our host. I have the honor to be

Yours, etc.

“St. Denis! but your captain is a gentleman of the best. Ask him to come and see me.”

“I will, and you must not get well too soon. Your uncle is anxious, and is both silent and scared, no bad thing. Mlle. Rosalie is in tears; altogether you ought not to be an unhappy young man.”

“Well, you have brought me some sunshine, but I am what you call bored. My aunt calls, but cannot mount the stairs. Do come soon again—and Merton.”

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

"I think you want better care. I will let you have Alphonse for a week or so."

"Delightful. He is most amusing, and at the Guillotine Club is our servant, as you saw."

"Yes; he will enliven you. By the way, he knows pretty much all there is to know about this embroglio."

"Indeed."

"Yes; but you may trust him. He was in and through a very perilous adventure with Merton and me some time ago, and showed courage and discretion. No one will hear of the duel of M. Joseph and Count de la Motte from Alphonse."

"Thank you, and do send him soon."

A note from me to M. Blanchelande, speaking casually of this unfortunate duel, terminated the count's hostile relation to M. Joseph the Jacobin. I, as a Jacobin, also visited M. Granson, the too busy uncle, now again in Paris, and so alarmed him that he reported to the Jacobin Club that his friend M. Joseph had changed his lodgings, and had probably left Paris. It was sadly to be feared, he added,

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

that M. Joseph had no mind to a serious encounter with the angry respondent of the Guillotine Club.

I went away next day to Marseilles on legation business and was gone a week. On my return I found the count still in bed, but patient enough.

Once or twice a day Alphonse came to care for me and my rooms, and always was present at breakfast. I soon saw that he was eager to talk, but knew that he would as usual wait for me to invite the outflow. Sometimes he was exasperatingly silent, and sometimes quite too free of speech concerning what he saw or heard.

I said, one morning, "Alphonse, are there no other clubs?"

He moved around the table so as to face me. "Clubs! *Mon Dieu!* I want for monsieur and his friends no more clubs. The Jacobin vermin have gone, broken up."

"Why not before?"

"The police is, as Providence, patient. My cousin—"

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

"Ah, your cousin of the police."

"The captain desired to know him. The rest came of monsieur's amiability."

"Mine? What do you mean—my amiability?"

"Yes, sare."

"Stuff! Don't try your English on me."

"Yes, sare. Monsieur may remember that having been, to my grief, a visitor at this low club, he did say to the captain they were uneasy and would meet elsewhere, and caution was mentioned as desirable. Monsieur did think there was too much politics and perhaps foolish plots of which M. Granson hinted."

"Well, what then?"

"The captain saw my cousin. He is in much favor with the superior police. My cousin, alas! loves money. The rest is mystery—circumstances, Monsieur—some arrests. The Captain Merton is amazed—bored when things go quietly."

"Well, go on."

"The club is dead. M. Joseph—ah, the poor Joseph he is in bed. He has also left Paris.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

He is no more. Which of him is dead I know not. There should be obsequies, funeral for M. Joseph departed this life, to the joy of the Count de la Motte. When I did tell him, he gave me a napoleon, because he was pleased when I proposed to him, as the surviving relative of M. Joseph, to send out letters *de faire part*. I did tell the captain, but he said to go to the devil, which is not needed, for he too often come to the captain. Pardon, Monsieur, I mean to me. When I thus mourned over M. Joseph, the count gave me another napoleon, and ordered champagne for his dinner."

Thus, enlightened by Alphonse and somewhat annoyed, I asked Captain Merton what use he had made of my careless statement in regard to my brother Jacobins, he said his memory was bad, and declined to confess. We seemed, to the regret of the captain, to be now done with the complications of our friend's dual personality; but his aunt was still uncomfortable in regard to the count's engagement. To the amusement of Merton and myself, Al-

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

phonse was the means of adjusting this matter.

The third week after the duel in the garden, Merton and I were at breakfast in his rooms in the rue du Roi de Rome when Alphonse appeared with a note from Count de la Motte.

The captain read it aloud:

MY DEAR MERTON: Come in to-morrow. My aunt, the Marquise de Châtelet, has written to me that she is much pleased to have learned of my gallant conduct in an abortive affair with a wretch belonging to the Club of Jacobins, but hopes I will now marry and have no more duels. There may have been of late expenses, she writes, of doctors, etc., and incloses a handsome cheque. Also, Mademoiselle Rosalie is to be taken to see her to-morrow, which will end a long family quarrel. Congratulate me. I do not quite understand how she came to hear of the Jacobin muddle. It revives a little my uneasiness. I hoped it dead and buried.

Merton looked up. "Alphonse, you rascal, you have been taking notes to madame the aunt."

"Yes, Monsieur."

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

“Tell us all about it.”

“If my master permits.”

“Oh, go on. What have you been doing now?”

“Two days ago I was to bring an answer from the marquise to a note, and was bid to go up-stairs. Monsieur has seen the lady?”

“Yes.”

“She is of great size. There is much of her. She said: ‘You are by the kindness of M. Greville caring for the count. A miserable business, most regrettable.’ ‘Ah, Madame,’ I say, ‘there might have been a worse, only—’ and I stopped.

“Madame says, ‘Go on,’ and I, ‘Ah, Madame may not know that because my grandfather sheltered his master he was guillotined, and I am at times a servant of the Society of Ancestors, and so chance to know of the lamentable duels with the low-born Jacobin Club. The count was chosen to represent the Royalist club in an affair, and when the Jacobin was not easy to insult I know not what the count did to that miserable man. No one does know.

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

The count is reticent, like all the brave. It was one of the name of Joseph—a M. Joseph. He would not think of pistols, that man. He is gone—fled. Even as far as America he is gone, Madame, and—and now it seems that the police has dispersed the Club of Jacobins.’

“When I told her this, the old lady stood up. She is as the column in the Place Vendôme for height. She said: ‘The Lord be praised! And so the Jacobin ran away?’

“I said, ‘Yes, else the count would have killed him—that poor Joseph.’

“After that she said, ‘You seem rather too well informed.’

“I ventured to say madame la marquise must know that servants hear and see many things. I think she agreed with me, but all she said was, ‘Some of these things were better not talked about.’ Then she asked, ‘What did my nephew do to that Jacobin animal?’ I said: ‘I know not all. M. le Comte is not one who talks of himself: M. Joseph was not a gentleman. He may have kicked him. The person was, madame perceives, difficult to be insulted,

THE GUILLOTINE CLUB

like those of his kind. Monsieur found it necessary to be demonstrative.' ”

“Great Scott!” said Merton. “What else?”

“The lady wrote a note to the count, and I think it was of a nature to please. Then she gave me a napoleon, and I am sorry it is all over. It was productive.”

“You are a man of genius, Alphonse.”

“Merci, Monsieur.”

“I, too, am sorry it is over,” said Captain Merton. “And now again Paris will be dull. What about the club of thieves, Greville?”

“No more clubs for me,” I said.



CAPTAIN MERTON

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

A STORY OF THIRTEEN AT TABLE

I

“DO try to come home early this evening,” said Mrs. Woodburn, as she sat at breakfast.

“Yes, yes, my dear; certainly,” her husband said in an absent way, the morning paper he was glancing over being between them. Then aware that he had heard without clearly understanding, and being a man with perfect marital manners, he laid the paper aside as he said: “Pardon me. You were saying, my dear—”

“I meant to say that I am a little nervous about this dinner. I did say that I hoped you would come home early because, if anything happens—”

“But what can happen?” he asked, ignoring

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

the state of mind in which any such mild enterprise as a formal dinner always found the mistress of their well-ordered household. Experienced middle age, ample means, and unquestioned social place had not sufficed, as he knew, to set her mind at ease.

"What can happen?" he repeated, as he cracked an egg-shell. "Your dinners are always pleasant. Why do you worry yourself?"

"You know, Harry, I never worry; but I am a little anxious when we have fourteen. Some one is sure to fall out just at the last minute."

"Has it ever happened—to us, I mean?"

"No; but it might."

"Of all the absurd superstitious survivals, this does seem to me the maddest."

"Of course; but it does survive. I have it, and so have a good many people who have not the courage to admit it."

"That is no doubt true, and of course one does have to consider anything that may make a guest uncomfortable. You are quite right. But now I must go. I saw that you had a letter from Sarah."

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

"Yes. She finds Albany pleasant and gay, and her aunts delighted to have her. I wish she were here."

"Still uneasy? Well, I shall be at home early in case of trouble about that fourteenth man or woman. How is your stenographer doing? You have had her three days. Is she useful?"

"She is very well dressed," said Mrs. Woodburn, inconsequently.

Her husband laughed.

"What a feminine criticism! But is the young woman what you wanted?" He knew that her household was well managed, but at cost of too much toil, due to his wife's want of method. She, too, lamenting what her incapacity cost her, was quite unable to correct the evil. When her husband had insisted on her using his stenographer, she had been amazed, as are such natures, at the accuracy and easy business ways of the highly competent secretary. She had now, as she answered him, one of the outbursts of enthusiasm to which unstable feminine temperaments are subject. She

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

had little humor and in large and small matters she lacked sense of proportion; for inevitably these two defects exist together.

“Harry, she is wonderful!”

“Oh, hardly that.”

“Yes, invaluable! A very remarkable person. Oh, you may smile,—it was so like a man to smile,—I always want to stop when people smile.”

“My dear, it is one of the forms of social punctuation—useful at times.”

“I really don’t understand you, Harry. Miss Smith *is* invaluable. She writes a lady-like hand, and for the first time in years my check-book balances to a penny. She is here on the stroke of five, and—”

“What a lesson in punctuality, my dear! I must say for the young woman that, excepting Mr. Ware, she is the best stenographer in our office. She does not talk unless addressed, and has a kind of reserve not always found in the office woman of her occupation.”

“I confess she puzzles me a little.”

“I am not surprised. She came to us with

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

high commendation from the Union Business College. Mr. Eyton said in his private answer to my application that she had one drawback—she was too strikingly handsome.”

“I should not speak of her as striking in any way,” said Mrs. Woodburn.

Again her husband smiled.

“And I should. But men and women rarely agree about a woman’s looks. This girl’s ways—her behavior—are the more important matter. What my head clerk calls her business manners are all one could desire. She is quiet, industrious, accurate, and calmly repellent when any of the juniors speak to her of anything but her work. Certainly she is handsome.”

“Is she your own stenographer?”

“Yes,” he replied, slightly annoyed.

“Of course I had some little introductory talk with her the first day you sent her here. I thought her rather self-possessed for so young a woman. I suppose that she may be about twenty-seven; but it is only a guess.”

“Oh, younger, much younger, I fancy.

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

Have you never observed, my dear, that one handsome woman is apt to set the age of another rather in advance of the fact?"

"There is no fact in this case unless you asked her."

"Thanks, Madam," he said, laughing. "This witness did not ask. Did you?"

"I did not—that is, not directly. She was uncommunicative. In fact, she has amazingly self-protective manners."

"Not a bad description. A valuable quality at need."

"There should be no need of it here."

"Unless her age were in question. That is a fair matter for feminine self-defense."

He readily understood that his wife must no doubt have been kindly curious about a young woman whom he himself felt to be an unusual person, and, too, that the girl had shown no inclination to talk of herself.

"There certainly is some mystery about her," said Mrs. Woodburn, reflectively.

"Well, that is no business of ours."

"Perhaps not." Mrs. Woodburn was in

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

doubt. "Her manners are quite too good."

Her husband laughed. "What! Both dress and manners! Perhaps I had better tell her. Correction of too good manners should be easy."

"Oh, Harry, I said she was well dressed, not too well dressed." And then, with some dim apprehension of his meaning, "You really are a—a trifle exasperating at times."

"How literal you are, Helen! Good-by; I shall be here early."

A busy day and the decision of a large suit in his favor brought him home about seven o'clock in high good humor. He found his wife already dressed and in the drawing-room.

"Well," he said, "no thirteen at table to-night. Who have we, and who falls to my share?"

"You are to take in Mrs. Grey."

"Good!"

"And do not talk to her all the time. You have Miss Van Seckel on your left."

He made a wry face. "She is very absorbent of talk; and— Who else, my dear?"

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

"I had trouble with the rest, but Miss Smith was helpful and really quite suggestive. She wrote the cards, and now, I think, it is all pretty good. Of course the bishop goes in with me, and the admiral is on my left, with Mrs. Welles. Then comes the French secretary, who speaks very little English, and between him and the German engineer, who speaks none, I put Miss Nelson, who can chatter in both tongues; and so on. It is all right, Harry; and I am so relieved. You had better go and dress."

As he rose, Miss Smith appeared, saying, as she entered:

"Very fortunately I stayed, Mrs. Woodburn, thinking you might need me. Miss Nelson 'phones that she has toothache and cannot come."

"I knew it!" cried Mrs. Woodburn. "Thirteen at table! What shall I do?"

"May I not 'phone for some one else?" said the tall girl.

"Yes," said Woodburn. "Come up to the library, Helen." His wife followed him, la-

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

menting her ill luck. Miss Smith sat down at the 'phone while Woodburn turned over the directory.

"Try Mrs. Smallwood," said his wife. "Not Mrs. George—the widow."

"Number 3421 Madison," read Woodburn.

"Hello! hello! Give me 3421 Madison! They do not answer."

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Woodburn.

"Oh, yes. Central says wire is out of order."

"Of course," cried the hostess. "Then Madge Delaney, Harry."

"I have her, 209 West," said he.

"I am sorry," said Miss Smith, turning from the 'phone; "she is dressing to dine out."

"Oh, this is too dreadful!" wailed Mrs. Woodburn. "Try Helen Carstairs. Tell her I must have her."

"She is sorry, but the baby has whooping-cough."

"Well, I certainly do not want her," said Mrs. Woodburn.

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST.

"Of course not. Try 9202 Fifth Avenue—Miss Jane Crayton."

"Hello, Central! Give me 9202 Fifth Avenue! . . . The butler says out of town."

"Harry, what shall we do! I told you something would happen."

"If all fails, I can go to bed with a bad headache, my dear."

"Oh, don't joke about it, Harry!"

Miss Smith sat quiet at the 'phone, apparently an uninterested part of the mechanism of communication, while Woodburn, troubled by his wife's evident distress, said at last:

"No one will notice it, my dear."

"Every one will notice it. Miss Van Seckel will have a fit."

"Heavens! if she only would!" said Woodburn.

"Why not 'phone her," said the unmoved stenographer, "that you have thirteen at table? Then she would not come."

Woodburn repressed his mirth. His wife, silently indignant for a moment, said nothing.

"Come," said Woodburn, once more, "there

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

is Cousin Susan Maynan. Oh, I have her, 423 Stone."

"Hello! hello! 423 Stone! I said 423—
speak louder, Central!"

There was a long pause.

"She says she is engaged; very positively, I infer, sir, from her voice."

"I don't believe her," said the distracted hostess. "The cat! It is because we asked her so late."

"Don't go yet, Miss Smith," said Woodburn. "Come with me, Helen." He drew her into a back room.

"Now, what is it, Harry. We cannot dine thirteen at table. I know you would die, or some one."

"We are at the end of our resources. Suppose, my love, we ask Miss Smith—"

"Oh, Harry—"

"Now, listen! No one knows her. Your maid can dress her in one of Sarah's gowns. They are much of a size."

"What an absurd idea! And to put her between two foreigners, a girl unused to society,

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

without a word of either man's tongue—"

"Well, rearrange the table."

"Now that is so like a man. How can I? It is half-past seven and later. Oh, twenty minutes to eight!"

"What else can we do, dear? As of course the girl can't talk to either man at all, there will be no social blunders. Come, dear, decide."

"But after dinner, Harry! Heavens!"

"She must be introduced as a young friend on a brief visit; and, by George! she will be at least the handsomest of the lot."

"Will she do it? What a dilemma!"

"To die or not to die," he murmured. "Wait a moment, my dear; I will ask her—wait."

He went back to the 'phone. "Miss Smith, my wife is in despair; will you not take the vacant place at our dinner table? You can wear one of my daughter's gowns, and we shall be greatly obliged."

She rose, facing him as he spoke. For a moment her chin muscles twitched,—a certain sign of emotion,—her eyes filled. As he

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

waited he wondered what caused her evident distress.

“Well?” he said. “I am sorry to hurry you—but, pray, decide.”

“I will do it,” she said, decisively.

“Thank you.”

In a moment his wife had disappeared with the girl, and he went up-stairs to dress, a little anxious, a little amused, and very curious, concerning the outcome of this social venture. When dressed, he met his wife at the head of the staircase.

“How does she look, Helen?”

“Look? Terribly handsome. All the men will want to know her. Sarah’s slippers are too large for her, but the gown is all right. Had I not better warn her about—about certain things?”

“Decidedly not. And, my dear, as Miss Van Seckel and more will be sure to ask who this young woman is, I suppose we had better agree that she is a young friend from the country with us for a day or two, as I said.”

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

"Harry, we are committing a social fraud, and I am to fib to support it."

"A case of conscience for the bishop. You might consult him in strict confidence."

"I do wish you would take it more seriously."

"Serious! Indeed, I consider it so. But do not try to overmanage the actors in our comedy."

"Comedy! It is tragedy. It will end ill, I am sure."

"I am not so sure. Well, we go on first. I hear the door-bell."

As he spoke they passed together into the drawing-room, she still anxious, he with difficulty restraining the sense of humor of which not the gravest situation entirely deprived him.

"Delighted to see you, Bishop. Good evening, Admiral." Mrs. Woodburn's face cleared as the famous sailor said some pleasant trifle, and the guests came in rapid succession.

"I think they are all here, Harry."

"Except the leading lady," he said.

"Oh, Harry, I forgot, the butler! He will know. I never thought of that."

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

She glanced about the room. The attaché was struggling with a tongue unknown to man in which Mrs. Welles was trying to make herself understood. The German engineer officer, who had received a dinner-card with the name of Miss Smith, was awkwardly waiting, not at all comprehending what he was to do.

II

“MISS SMITH,” announced the butler with unusual lift of voice. In the doorway stood a young woman in full evening dress. There are some women for whom what is charitably described as full dress is a fatal test; there are others for whom it is the precisely perfect setting of a radiant jewel. The master of the house murmured, “By George!” and went promptly to meet her. He was at his courteous best, and felt that the young woman he had committed to an impossible task must be embarrassed by a social position to which she was utterly unused. If so, she showed no signal of distress, but said quietly as she approached:

“I am late, I fear, Mr. Woodburn; but the streets are so crowded.”

More than Mrs. Woodburn were struck by this tall and graceful girl who came forward

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

with her host, white-gloved, fan in hand, smiling, and apparently at ease.

“I have apologized to Mr. Woodburn for being late. I repent and promise to be better behaved the next time.”

“The next time, indeed!” said to herself the amazed hostess, and then aloud, and with entire coolness:

“You are welcome late or early, my dear. Admiral, let me present you to our friend Miss Smith. She came in on us from the country just in time to save me from thirteen at table. Not that I care—”

“Oh, yes; but I do,” said the admiral. “You are doubly fortunate in this case, Madam: you preserve life and enrich it.”

“So happy to be a life-saving device!” said Miss Smith.

Mr. Woodburn presented the German engineer officer, and, to Mrs. Woodburn’s relief, dinner was announced. The table was pretty, and not loaded with the high flowers which prevent a view of opposite neighbors. On the whole, the guests were felt by the hostess to be

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

well seated except for the two foreigners between whom sat Miss Smith, the hapless sacrifice to a social difficulty. Mrs. Woodburn was more than merely sorry for her, and with some relief and more surprise saw her adjust her gown as she took her place. The hostess's fears made her uneasily watchful for the series of mishaps which she felt certain must soon or late betray awkward inexperience. Distracted into inattention to the bishop, she was only able to keep up an appearance of listening with the aid of exclamatory brevities of "Just so!" "Ah, really!" while she stole glances to left or kept watch to hear what would come after the quiet moment of adjustment of napkins. The ill luck which had pursued her dinner had obliged Mrs. Woodburn to place between the attaché and the admiral a dull, middle-aged woman, Mrs. Welles, who dined to eat and whose fragmentary French served to add for the diplomat the interest of charades; so answerless that at last he was driven to talk across his relieved neighbor to the famous admiral, who understood him readily and replied

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

in French which had the courage and enterprise of the navy.

Hearing the young attaché say, "Pardon me, Admiral, does my neighbor Miss Smith speak French?" the hostess replied for him:

"Not a word—at least, I fear not." Her strange young guest appeared just then to be silently listening to the German.

"Ah, well," said the diplomat, still speaking across Mrs. Welles, "I shall at least try."

"It is a new face to me," remarked the admiral. "She has the beauty of unusual distinction and the distinction of unusual beauty." He felt that he had said something worthy of his reputation for gallantry.

"Ah, but what a charming description!" said the diplomat, repeating it in French.

"You are delightfully elaborate in your compliments, Admiral," said the hostess, overhearing them. She was not altogether pleased. Here was terrible certainty of attention to the guest whose correct rôle was to be silent and to excite no remarks. The admiral had spoken in French, and had a voice of command, trained

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

to be heard at distance. To Mrs. Woodburn's amazement, Miss Smith turned from the German.

"Ah, Admiral, what woman could be so free from vanity as not to claim property in such a salute from the flag-ship."

This gay recognition of the sailor's phrase of admiration Mrs. Woodburn felt to be rather in the manner of middle age than what was fitting in a young woman.

"I should not have dared to say it, Mademoiselle," said the young Frenchman, "but I may at least venture not to disagree with the admiral."

"Merci, Monsieur," said Miss Smith.

Mrs. Woodburn missed his reply, but knew in a few moments that they were chatting in fluent French and discussing French country life.

The admiral, as he said later, was left stranded on the engrossing silence of Mrs. Welles's appetite. Mrs. Woodburn for a brief moment sat still, and then, a little bewildered, listened or tried to listen to the admiral. Pres-

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

ently she overheard the German say something, and while the Frenchman, turned to Mrs. Welles and the admiral, Miss Smith, in easy German, talked with the enchanted engineer officer.

It was quite too much for Mrs. Woodburn. "A pencil, James," to the butler, and on the back of a menu-card she wrote: "I knew something would happen. It is bewildering! She is talking French and German. H. W."

"Take this to Mr. Woodburn," she said. The card came back.

"Send her down here. I will swop off Miss Van Seckel. My congratulations. H. W."

The wife tore up the card, threw it under the table, and, resolute to bear this calamity with Christian patience, set herself to the task she liked when at ease, the kindly manœuvres of a clever hostess intent on seeing to it that no one should have a dull hour. The mid-table guests were out of reach. Mrs. Newton, a middle-aged dame, was left to herself quite too long by the men beside her. It could not be

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

helped. The gaiety at the farther end of the table was growing, as the hostess thought, quite beyond the tranquil tone of a formal dinner. Her husband was evidently in one of his moods of reckless, social enjoyment of which she mildly disapproved. Neither the German officer nor the attaché concerned themselves with any neighbor but Miss Smith, who took no wine, as Mrs. Woodburn noticed, but smiling, at ease, and low-voiced, kept up a polyglot exchange of what seemed to keep her dinner comrades in a condition of mirthful glee.

The admiral, accustomed to being considered, thought the woman on his left hopelessly dull, and calmly gave himself up to a good dinner, after remarking that Germany and France were contending for Alsace and Lorraine. Mrs. Welles said, "Yes, quite so," and retired into the seclusion of her mind to think it over. Now and then the hostess spoke across the corner of the table, making constantly defeated attempts to secure the attention of the diplomat to the woman between him and the admiral. The attaché, understanding her, did his re-

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

sponsive best to interfere with Mrs. Welles's earnest interest in the menu, but between the double difficulty of his own maimed English and the lady's halting French, he soon gave up and waited his chance to renew his gay chat with Miss Smith. The whole thing had got out of hand, and in despair Mrs. Woodburn turned to talk missions to her clerical friend, who preferred any other subject, and soon began to ask embarrassing questions about the young woman who was so very handsome. There was relief and fear in Mrs. Woodburn's mind when, earlier than her husband liked, she rose to leave the men to their wine. As she passed him, she said, laughing:

"Now, Harry, small cigars," and then in a half-whisper: "Do come soon! What *shall* I do with her?"

As the women went up-stairs, Miss Van Seckel in an aside said to her hostess: "Who is that fresh young beauty, Helen? Your husband was provokingly mysterious about her. He made us all curious."

"Did he, indeed? So like him. There is

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

not the least mystery," replied Mrs. Woodburn. "She happened to be here for a day, and saved us from thirteen at table."

"How fortunate! So Mr. Woodburn told us. It would not have mattered, he said, because he was twins."

"How confusing!" said Mrs. Welles, overhearing them.

Miss Smith had so managed as to fall in at the end of the women guests, and, entering last, went quietly across the drawing-room. Mrs. Woodburn, feeling pity for what she still felt ought to be the embarrassment of a peculiar position, took her hand and saying:

"This way, Miss Smith," led her to the sofa, where Miss Van Seckel sat in the glory of an expanse of sallow neck and many diamonds.

"Pray be careful!" murmured her hostess, the next moment vexed at herself as the girl, with a little hauteur in her voice, asked, "May I know why?"

"Our young friend, Miss Smith, Miss Van Seckel," said Mrs. Woodburn. Distinctly angry, and also aware of having made a blun-

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

der, she turned away, leaving her guest to the inquisition which she would gladly have had her escape, but which she knew to be soon or late unavoidable. Miss Van Seckel was rich, positive, accustomed to deference, and made curious by Mr. Woodburn's vague replies.

"Sit nearer," she said. "I am a little less able to hear than I used to be. The young people nowadays speak so indistinctly. You are here only for a day, I am told."

"Yes, only for a day."

"And where do you live, my dear?"

"Ah, Miss Van Seckel, not everybody lives. I exist." The girl laughed gaily. Miss Van Seckel felt that she was being disrespectfully trifled with.

"But you do not answer me. I am interested."

"And I. It is a question in geography, and I was never good at that. Just now I have been back in Germany and Paris. I found my two dinner companions most agreeable."

"You certainly seemed to be gay."

"Oh, not noisy, surely not noisy. Count von

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

Kelser was telling me what the old Empress said about closing the gambling-rooms at Baden. It was really a very clever story. You have been at Baden?"

"Yes," said Miss Van Seckel, feeling that her investigation had not prospered.

"Then I will tell you in German; it is really so pretty in German. I suppose you have gambled at Baden—every one did."

"I do not gamble, and I do not speak German."

"Oh, but in Dutch. I can manage it in Dutch. I have an idea that all you old Knickerbocker people speak Dutch."

"Then you are mistaken." Miss Van Seckel felt that Miss Smith was amusing herself, and could it be at her expense? She lifted her glasses, and, looking at the young lady, said, "You seem to have been much abroad."

"Oh, never so much as now. Do tell me who all these nice people are. You see, I am quite an *ingénue* from the country, and if you would really be so good. Ah, I shall lose my chance!" she said, rising to greet a noble-look-

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

ing, elderly lady, approaching with their host and the bishop, who said:

"I take the liberty of a house friend to present myself. I am Mrs. Grey; come and talk to me. We leave you the bishop, Miss Van Seckel. He has deserted the men."

Relieved to escape, Miss Smith sat down with Mrs. Grey.

"You are the blessed fourteenth who saved us all. Shall you be here long?"

"No; I am here only for a day."

"What a pity! Young, lovely,—pardon me, my dear, I am not a man,—you would enjoy New York. No?" Mrs. Grey detected a strange note in the pleasant young voice, and then heard with surprise:

"Could not I slip out unnoticed?"

"Are you ill, child?"

"Oh, worse. I must go."

"Keep quiet a little. I will talk," and she talked on until presently there were fresh groupings, and the girl, having lost her chance of escape, rallying, took a share in the light, after-dinner chat, aided by the clever hostess

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

and the sympathetic, slightly puzzled elder lady. Then presently the men came in, and the admiral took his seat by the strange guest and fell into talk about the Mediterranean ports, with which she seemed to be well acquainted.

“What a fascinating young woman!” he said to his host as he moved and gave place to a younger man. “What charm, what distinction!”

“Yes, quite remarkable. What is it, my dear?” This to his wife, as she turned to speak to him.

“Count von Kelsler will sing for us if some one will accompany him; but I can find no one.” To her amazement, Miss Smith said:

“Perhaps I may be able.”

“What next?” thought Mrs. Woodburn, as the girl, asking a question or two in quickly spoken German, sat down at the piano and swept the keys with a practised hand. The count sang fairly well two German songs, and then said:

“You sing—I am sure you sing.”

“Yes, with Mrs. Woodburn’s permission,”

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

said the girl. "Have you heard any of the modern Greek love-songs? They are rather unusual."

"No," said Woodburn, while his wife stood by in speechless astonishment, and a rare soprano rang through the room.

"Please, another!" said the bishop, and she broke into a soft Italian lullaby. Then rising and gathering up her gloves and fan, which she had laid on the side of the piano, she said:

"You must excuse me, Mrs. Woodburn, if I run away early." Then in a whispered aside, she added, "I must see you just a moment before I go." As she spoke, a number of young men and girls and an older matron came in, merry and talking.

"You promised us a little dance, Aunt Helen," said one of them; "and we left the opera early to come here."

"Ah, now!" said the German officer, "we are promised to dance. Is it not so, Madam?" And to Miss Smith, "You will do me the honor?"

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

Hoping that her amazing guest would now relieve her by leaving, as she had promised, Mrs. Woodburn, having secured a good-natured dame to play, turned again to speak to Miss Smith. The young woman hesitated a moment, and then with a look of elation said, "With pleasure, *mein Herr*."

In a moment she was moving in the waltz with the officer, the light of wild enjoyment in her eyes and something, as Woodburn thought, of reckless abandonment to the intoxication of rhythmic movement with a master of the joyous art. It was impossible for any one to fail to note the grace of the two tall figures which shared equally the pleasure, and conveyed the impression of some quality of motion which set them apart from the other dancers among whom they moved.

"Ah!" she exclaimed of a sudden, "pray stop!" for in a quick reverse movement one of Miss Woodburn's slippers, far too large for the dancer's foot, flew off. Two young men ran to pick it up, but the old admiral was quicker, and, slipper in hand, bowed as the

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

young woman sank on the nearest chair. He said merrily:

"May I have the honor?"

"It is I who am honored," said Miss Smith.

"I regret," he said, smiling, "that I am too old for the fairy prince, Miss Cinderella."

"Fairy princes are of no age," she returned, laughing.

"One more turn, Fräulein," said her partner, and for another minute or two of intense enjoyment she moved in the dance. Then at last, flushed and thrilling with a long-absent joy, as he released her she said to the diplomat, pleading for his turn:

"No, I shall dance no more; I must go."

"But later, presently, again," said Von Kelsner.

"No—not again; never!"

"Ah, Fräulein, that is a long day."

"Yes, a long day."

Many eyes followed her as she crossed the room to Mrs. Woodburn.

"Now I am going."

"Certainly, my dear, if you must." And

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

aside: "The maid will be up-stairs. I—I thank you. We are both obliged—greatly obliged."

"I shall wait to see you before I leave. Yes, I—I must wait—up-stairs."

With a courteous word or two to those who thanked her for the unusual pleasure of her song, she cast a look over the dancers and the well-dressed groups and with filling eyes left the room, murmuring as she went: "Cinderella! Cinderella! Ah, why did I do it! But the joy of it—the joy!"

III

WHILE she was changing her dress, and in the hands of a wondering maid, there were those below stairs who were equally curious, and to whom the hostess was making a series of explanations which did more credit to her ingenuity than to her strict regard for truth. The new-comer had created an amount of admiration for which her hosts had been quite unprepared. What they expected was to see an obviously good-looking and clever stenographer avoid notice, make social blunders, and be glad to escape early from a society into which her inclination to oblige her employers had led her. To explain to their friends would have been easy.

They would be praised for their ingenuity, and when she had gone, would confess with laughter who was the shy, unnoticeable girl; but here on their hands was a quite different

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

business. They were glad when the last of their too curious guests had left. Woodburn had felt it well to say to some friends:

“Yes, a pleasant little escape; so fortunate to have had her. I am sorry to say that she leaves to-morrow.” He was aware that now the presence of Miss Smith in his office might require a quite different explanation; but the future concerned him very little when, the last guest having gone, he sat down in his library to smoke a contentful cigar. While he reflected with wonder, curiosity, and amusement upon the very dramatic outcome of the effort to secure the life-saving guest, Mrs. Woodburn was on her way up-stairs. For her there was wonder and embarrassment, but certainly nothing amusing, in the social comedy. She was a woman whose inexactness in statement had won her an undeserved reputation of being untruthful, whereas she was keenly sensitive as concerned departure from verity. Now she had to her discredit a dozen fibs and,—oh, to the bishop,—one or two full-blown lies.

Her mood was one of anger with every body

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

concerned in this unpleasant experience. Above all, what business had this girl to pass as a stenographer and blossom so inconceivably into an accomplished woman? Whatever had been her unreasonable moods, as she went slowly up-stairs, they gave place to a sense of deepest pity as she entered her daughter's room.

Miss Smith, alone and dressed for the street, sat at the fire, sobbing like a child.

"Oh, my dear," cried Mrs. Woodburn, "what is the matter? Was it too much for you? We were—we are so much obliged—are you not well? Stay here and go quietly to bed."

The girl did not look up, and merely shook a hand in air, a wild gesture of negation.

Her trouble was the more distressing to the kindly matron because she could not explain it. She drew a chair to the fire, and, as she sat down, captured a reluctant hand.

"I shall insist on your staying here. Let me send the carriage away—"

"No, no!" She made a movement as if to rise.

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

“But do listen, my good child!”

“I am not good, and I am not a child.” Here she turned, facing Mrs. Woodburn. “I waited only because I did not choose to leave you without saying that we shall never meet again. You must thank Mr. Woodburn for his constant courtesy in the office.”

“But, my dear, can we not help you? What is the matter? Why do you go?”

“Because I have again been with people of my own caste, and—and I have no right—no—right.”

“But what is there—surely—I—”

“Oh, no, no! I will not be questioned. It is over. I shall see it no more. Let me go.”

She would say nothing further, but went down the stairs silent, unyielding. At the door Mrs. Woodburn said:

“If we can in any way—”

“No. Never, never!” She passed out and into the carriage and disappeared.

When Helen Woodburn returned to her husband, and, much distressed, related this interview, he said:

THE FOURTEENTH GUEST

“It is very sad. She is still so young and so beautiful; what possible explanation can there be?”

“I might, as a woman, guess.”

“And I, as a man. Poor child! She will disappear utterly.”

On inquiry at her lodging-house next day, this proved to be the case.

THE MIND-READER

THE MIND-READER

I

A TOO frank cousin of mine once said of me that I was a rolling stone, with the usual result. I replied to this admonitory tribute that I had at least become polished in rolling, and left him to make his own inference. That I have rolled much is true. A part of my rolling, however, has not been of my own will, but the result of circumstance.

The death of my mother and sister within the same year left me with a very modest income; indeed, too little for a man who, after two years, had become sure that success in the practice of medicine was for him unattainable. In fact, I liked the study of medicine, but did not like the ordinary practice of it. Having failed of success as a general practitioner of medicine, I gave it up to become an ill-paid

THE MIND-READER

assistant in a hospital for the insane. After three years, a fortunate chance enabled me to become resident physician to the Central Penitentiary. Here at last I had work to my liking. The study of the criminal nature deeply interested me, and for two years I was busy and happy. I wrote at this time several papers on the bodily and mental peculiarities of the inmates under my care. One of these contributions is still quoted as authoritative.

The life in a jail is sure in the end to sadden the kindly and to bring to the most hopefully optimistic a sense of failure.

This, my third venture, ended in deepening disgust, and I began to lose interest in the work. I had, in fact, one unusual quality—I knew in general when I had failed, and also why. Beyond this, I possessed a still more uncommon talent, which for a time I cultivated, and which was destined to play a part in my life and that of others. I was called a mind-reader. I never so labeled an undoubted power, but others thus described it. For some years at times I amused myself when travel-

THE MIND-READER

ing by the use of this faculty; but at last I gave up doing so because it demanded too intense attention, and because I felt that to pry unasked into the thoughts of another was hardly decent.

When one day I was waiting in the outer office of that cousin who had said I was a rolling stone, I saw two men talking on the pavement, and set myself to ascertain what they were engaged upon. It was for me the idle play of a leisure moment; but when my cousin came in, I said: "Mr. E— will offer you 51 dollars for X Y stock. Ask him 52: he will take it." When I explained to him how I knew this, he said it would not be honest, and whether he acted in accordance with his statement, I do not know. I went away thinking over the ethics of the stock market. I have always declined the attribution of mystery to the power I was believed to possess and laughingly refused to be investigated by psychical scientists, who had heard wild accounts of my capacity.

At this time, being melancholy and restless,

THE MIND-READER

I went one day into the park for one of the long, solitary cycle-rides which were almost my only diversion. While I was spinning along, deep in thought, a runaway hack flew by. I put on all possible speed, and came up to it just as a park guard caught the horses and for a moment turned them aside. The carriage struck a tree, and upset with a crash of broken glass. The horses broke loose and ran, while, the park guard aiding, we got out of the wreck a lean, little old gentleman, much bruised, and with his face badly cut by glass.

For a moment he lay dazed, and then sitting up, said, "I want my hat." It was found. Then he stood up. "I want a doctor."

"I am one," I said. I tied a handkerchief over his cut forehead, and, aided by the guard, put him in a cab which chanced to be at hand. I got in after him. The guard stood by expectant. Then the old gentleman took out a well-filled wallet, and selecting a quarter of a dollar, presented it to the guard, who threw it into the cab with an accompaniment of vigorous English, which I thought well deserved.

THE MIND-READER

My companion said: "Drive on. I ought to report that man for insolence." With this he picked up the money and put it in his pocket. "Girard Hotel," he said, "and tell him to hurry."

As we drove away, I said, "You are not much injured."

"Oh, it's the shock. I have a bad heart, and I am old—I mean, I am not young."

A queer figure he seemed to me. He was short, singularly thin, and as red as if rouged.

"Pay the cabman, doctor," he ordered me.

I did, but I never again saw the money.

I soon found that my patient was nervous and alarmed. He insisted upon my remaining all night, and as he had a very feeble circulation and a diseased heart, it was as well to oblige him. He would have no consultation, as it was too expensive, and he was satisfied with me. Neither did he want any one of his family sent for; and so I fought it out alone.

As he grew better, he talked to me of my own life with a degree of freedom and interest which I could not then comprehend, and which

THE MIND-READER

I did not relish. For some reason he took to me, one of those fancies to which the neurotic are subject, and after two weeks of grave illness told me that I was the only doctor who had ever understood his constitution.

When about to leave, he said: "We must now settle our accounts. There were sixty-three visits at one dollar each." He had noted them daily, even to the length of my stays.

"One dollar! Three," I said; "and the nights I spent—it comes to—"

"Don't mention it. Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "It is enormous. I can not bear shock. I have a proposal to make. You tell me you are tired of your present life, and you are a lover of books. If I secure for you a place in the Brookmead library at twelve hundred dollars a year, will you accept that in payment of the large sum you propose to exact? I shall expect you to take care of me." My first reflection was that he meant to get away without any kind of payment, but I soon saw that the offer was honest. I was of course rather astounded at the scheme of mak-



H. R. C. C. C.

THE MIND-READER

ing the library pay his debt, but the new life thus opened to me was entirely to my taste.

I said: "Frankly speaking, sir, is that possible?"

"Yes. I am a benefactor—I mean, I am regarded as a future benefactor of the library." He chuckled. "They will do as I say, and then, when I want you, I can always get you."

I said I would think it over, but had no idea it would come to anything. I had heard of the library as important. After some thought I said I would take the place. After he had gone, a week later, to my surprise, I got the offer, and promptly accepted. It turned out to be the beginning of a freshly happy and, as it proved, a somewhat eventful life. I had rolled into a place that suited me.

On my arrival I was able to satisfy Mr. Quarton, the librarian, in regard to my scholarship. As concerned my technical capacity as a librarian, that, he said, was of course hopeless. In time I might learn, oh, something, but unless a man had two generations of librarians back of him, it was of no

THE MIND-READER

use to pretend to achieve greatness. I see him now, with his big, inherited horn spectacles, his long gray hair, and a book under each arm.

I had two rooms assigned to me, with a bath-room, as I was, to my pleasure, to live in the building. My duties included general oversight, selection of such scientific books as were needed, and a variety of lesser matters.

The day after my arrival I saw my patient, Mr. White, come out of the librarian's room and enter the office assigned to me. "Glad to see you here, doctor," he said. "I am going to the club, No. 20 West street. Come in at seven and dine with me. Quiet place. No form."

I said I would come.

"You won't get much to eat," said Quarton. "No one ever dines with him more than once. He wants to consult you; but he won't ask you to come to his house. He might have to pay."

"Then he is a miser, I suppose."

"Miser! Superlative degree, miserrimus!"

THE MIND-READER

said Quarton, who hated him. "You'll see. By and by he will make you believe he has remembered you in his will."

This was a long speech for Mr. Quarton, whose name much amused me. "Never," said one of the assistants—"never ask what his Christian, or heathen, name is. No man knows it. He signs D. Quarton."

I went that evening to the Midway Club, which proved to be comfortable, and not too exclusive.

On my way, I reflected upon Mr. White as a curious variety of the genus man. During my life in the penitentiary,—where, alas! few were penitent,—I formed a habit of making notes of the appearance and mental and moral characteristics of criminals, and this habit proved so interesting that I extended it to the officers, and others of the few whom I met outside.

Of course Mr. Reuben White had his place. He was now becoming a fascinating study. A miser,—literally wretched?—not at all.

THE MIND-READER

He had the positive joy of acquiring and the negative joy of not expending. I was to see and know more of him.

Mr. White's welcome was most cordial. He had a well-contrived manner of expressing his pleasure upon meeting you. It cost him nothing, but somewhat failed by reason of lack of variety.

As a contribution to my knowledge of the man, the dinner was notable. As to food, we had soup, one portion, divided; then four mutton chops and potatoes. I received one chop and he two. He was long in chewing his food, having a theory that the more you masticated, the less food you needed.

He talked much and talked well, really a cultivated man. I was thinking that I should like to get at the basal motives of the hoarding instinct, if it be, as in some animals, instinctive, when I saw him glance about the room to see if he were observed. Apparently satisfied, and without in the least concerning himself about me, he rose, went out, and returning with paper from the club writing-table,



F. R. BRONSON.

"THAT," HE SAID, "WAS OF COURSE HOPELESS"

THE MIND-READER

wrapped up the remaining chop, tied it in his handkerchief, and put it in his pocket.

“And now,” he said, “do you drink coffee at night?” I did. When taking his cup, he secured four lumps of sugar, and added these to his store. I was hungry, but delighted with what I saw.

I was all this while regaled at times with his symptoms, until I said a physical examination would be required and must be made while he was in bed. I discovered very soon that my salary was meant to cover all the medical care Mr. White might need. The skill and delicacy with which this was conveyed to me was most interesting, and as he gave me but little trouble, I calmly accepted the situation, and, as it proved, was most fortunate in having done so.

He proposed that evening to put me up at the club for membership, and as I could now afford it, I was pleased. My notes of him that night were: “Lover of books; greed for accumulation of money; infinite cunning in this pursuit.”

THE MIND-READER

My life at the library soon satisfied me. The work was easy, my time much my own. As I have said, I had had no opportunities for acquiring friends or even acquaintances to my taste, but here every week there came to the library a great many persons in all ranks of life. It became my duty to know some of these people, especially the scholars, and generally to aid any one in pursuit of knowledge or entertainment.

Thus it was that while I was interested in the books, I was even more so in those who read them; for much as books have been to me in my life, people are still more entertaining; and whether as comrades or counselors, whether evil or good, have for the reader of men advantages not possessed by books.

Mr. White was in the library every day, and, as one of the governing board from whom much was expected, he was treated with far too great consideration.

About the fourth month of my residence, a curious incident gave me a notable influence over this man and his increased respect.

THE MIND-READER

Mr. Daingerfield, one of our managers, a man of large inherited fortune, was the rich man of the city. He was also the permanent president of the hospital board, and able to indulge the luxury of giving way to a quick temper. When I instantly resented an impertinent criticism, he complained to the directors of the library; but as Mr. White was expected to leave money to both hospital and library, his intervention saved me.

One day in April I was talking to a young woman, Miss Musgrave, about a book, when I saw Mr. Daingerfield pass by.

Miss Musgrave said: "Did you ever see so bald a man! It looks so nice and smooth. One would like to pat it." I looked, and there was the face, full-bearded,—even to the heavy eyebrows, snow white,—with, around the bald head, a tonsure of bright red hair. "Really an exotic, that crop!" said my companion, laughing.

Mr. Daingerfield came upon Mr. White near my office, and White began to talk. They were facing us, but out of earshot. Presently

THE MIND-READER

excusing myself, and with too little thought of my action, I went up to them and said: "I can give you what you want, Mr. White. The average cost of hospital patients per day is from \$1.50 to \$1.60. Children cost more." I went on to convey in full the required information, and then retired to my office.

Presently came Mr. White. "Doctor Alston," he said, "did you hear what I asked Mr. Daingerfield?"

"No, I did not."

"Then how did you know?"

Meaning to amuse myself, I said, "Did you ever hear of mind-reading?"

"Mind-reading! Good heavens, sir, it is most amazing!"

"Yes," I laughed. "I have been accused of it before; once by Mr. Stevens, the cataloguer. He did not like it."

"Nor do I, sir. I want you to promise never to try it with me."

"Oh, I can readily promise that, Mr. White. It is rarely that I use this faculty. It requires intense concentration of attention."

THE MIND-READER

"I am relieved, sir." He was queerly uneasy. "It is a perilous faculty, Doctor Alston. Imagine such a power to become general! What a state of things there would be! Awful, sir! awful!" That, indeed, was my own opinion, and I have often since then amused myself with reflections upon the social and commercial consequences of such generalized universal insight.

Henceforth Mr. White treated me with increased respect, and at times regarded me with ill-concealed suspicion. Somehow the story got out and created interest, which I did not add to by any further use of my peculiar endowment, nor did I attempt to explain it when Mr. White reopened the subject.

As time ran on, I made the acquaintance of a man who attracted me as no one else did. He was George Fernwood, an army officer, a captain of engineers, engaged upon some defense work in the harbor. I sometimes classify people as books. Fernwood was one of those human volumes which, admirably edited by events, are full of such contrasts as make

THE MIND-READER

unusual appeal to the student of character.

In my note-book he is thus described:

George Fernwood, five feet, ten inches; neatly made, a certain harmony in his build. Regular features, bronzed by exposure. General expression gentle and, as I read it, something of a look of appeal. Mouth the most eloquent feature. Lip lines classic.

Career—Success as engineer, medal of honor for gallant action in Indian battle. So set down in the army list.

Studies—primary, scientific; secondary, history, especially of the mystics; rarely fiction.

Character—Courage, physical, perfect; courage, moral, unknown.

Mind of high order, investigative. Imagination of sympathetic type, not productive.

Manners, courteous; a gentleman, a man to trust.

This was my record after several months of increasing intimacy during which I discovered that after a time the rate of acquaintance with him had limitations such as in my experience are often found in the finer natures. A word is needed to fill the descriptive gap between "acquaintance" and "friend." He evidently liked me, but my sly gifts of self-revela-

THE MIND-READER

tion were not returned in kind. About this there was something not unpleasingly woman-like, and thus for a long time we drew no closer until certain events took place which materially affected his life and mine. In chemistry it sometimes happens that two substances which decline to unite are of a sudden brought to do so owing to the added presence of a third quite neutral body. In life a similar thing happens; a word, a thought, another's act, some trifle, abruptly alters the inter-relation of two people.

It so chanced with us. There are friends whom we acquire through the unthinking intimacies of childhood or owing to business or family relations. There are others whom, if we are wise in the art of life, we deliberately woo or win for some good reason. Of late, being now at ease, I had begun to cultivate the art of friendly capture, but, as concerned the Captain, I was for a time unsuccessful. We dined together at the club now and then, or, what I liked better, we spent an evening in my modest apartments. Here we talked of

THE MIND-READER

Indian war, of books and politics; but of his family, his more intimate life, and his opinions on religion, I learned nothing. Nevertheless, I felt rather than knew that we were slowly drawing together.

II

ONE evening, I asked him to my rooms, meeting him down-stairs. We walked through the vast book-lined reading-hall, now silent and dark except for the oblongs of moonlight cast across the floor.

I paused midway and said: "Is n't there something solemn and ghostly in this great columbarium of dead thought?"

"I feel it now, but I hardly think that I should have had the idea without your helping. I suppose that an immense number of these volumes will be, are, indeed, for scores of years as unread by man as are the present thoughts of the dead, if the dead still think."

"But they do speak here, and a great library should give at any cost the rare book some scholar asks for and must have. You of all men, who want the rarer books, must know that."

THE MIND-READER

“Yes,” he returned as we entered my room, and I turned on and lighted the gas—“yes, I suppose that I illustrated the rare need last week when I asked for the four volumes of that fine mystic, Robert Fludd. The old fellow who found these for me said that in twenty years he had never known them to be asked for. That he could be so sure, struck me as interesting. And he knew, too, the number and place of the book.”

“That form of memory is not very rare in old librarians. I, of course, do not possess it. Did Fludd amuse you?”

“Yes. I wanted to see what he says on the pulse. You may think that odd. His astrology was also of interest. I had a pleasant morning over his doctrine of nativities.”

Then I cast a cunning fly. I said: “Rare as Fludd is, a woman asked for it yesterday. She usually waits until she can get me to supply her wants. I set Master Fludd before her, but she soon returned it, remarking that she had not known it was in Latin.”

“Curious that,” said Fernwood.

THE MIND-READER

I thought I might venture further, and as I stood by the fire filling my pipe, I said: "As a coincidence it is even more than curious; for twice, just after you have asked for some rare book, Miss Musgrave has inquired for it. Last month it was Lea on 'Trial by Ordeal.' That did seem rather a queer choice for a young woman."

"Yes, rather," he returned; "quite unusual."

I began to understand, but as he thus quickly turned the talk aside, I did not gain much beyond a pleasant suspicion of there being some close relation between the two readers. I knew little of the social life of the great city, and my own acquaintances were chiefly such as I met at the club, which was a somewhat informal organization where one was not denied by cold usage the privilege of addressing a stranger. A day or two later I chanced to sit at luncheon next to a cheerful old man, who in twenty-five minutes asked me a dozen questions.

Mr. Burke was a bachelor without other business than that of a collector and freight-

THE MIND-READER

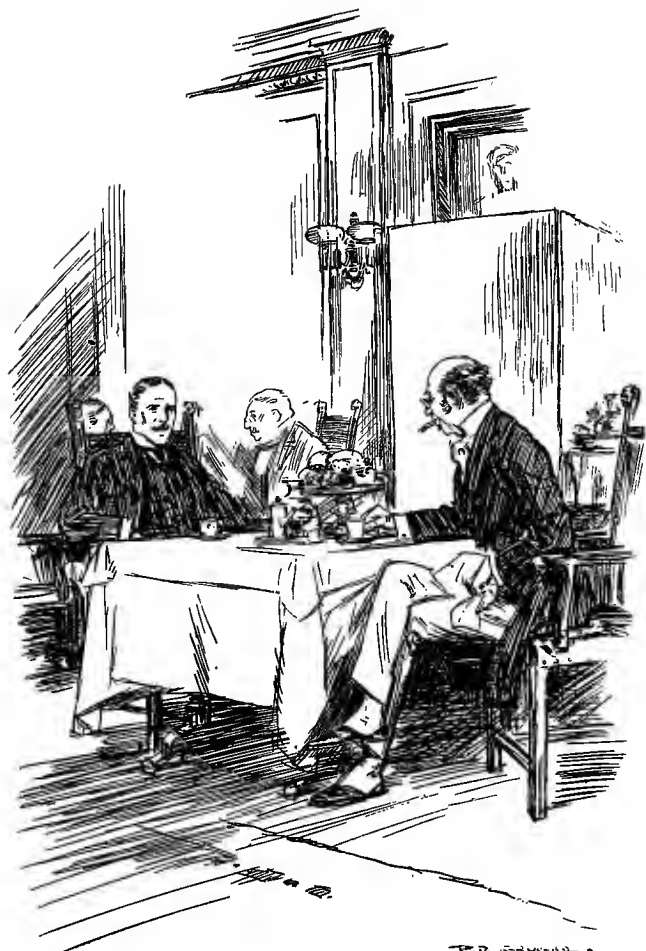
carrier of harmless gossip, and was the much-used friend of a dozen women. In these gentle pursuits he exhibited the proverbial industry of the bee. In the absence of a handy year-book of genealogy, his accurate knowledge of the limited social groups of long-seated American families was usually to be trusted, and his amiable reticence a not unpleasing trait, although at times he could be mildly malicious.

“Good wine that, Dr. Alston. By the way, your people must be South Carolinians.”

“Yes,” I said, “my father was; but he settled in Pennsylvania.”

“Good breed, sir. Know Mrs. Merton? I disturbed her, I fear—Colonial Dame: told her some of their genealogies were more genial than logical. Good that, was n’t it?” I laughed assent.

“One of them—oh, no names—one of them asked me about her right to belong to that queer society. Told her that her great grandfather in 1713 married his deceased wife’s



"TOLD HER SOME OF THEIR GENEALOGIES WERE MORE GENIAL THAN LOGICAL"

THE MIND-READER

sister. Know the English law? Make your inference."

I did. Then I said, "Do you know Miss Musgrave?" I was after information.

"Know her? Of course; niece of Mrs. Merton, charming girl. Father old friend of mine—dead. Got a fair fortune; not much. Engaged to army officer. Good fellow; damn poor match. Know her?"

I said, "Yes, slightly." There was no need to pump. The flow was easy, ample. Did I know that army man, name of Fernwood?

I said, "Yes," and thought the woman fortunate.

He did not agree with me. "That man has no common sense." Had I never heard about it?

I said no, which seemed to please my neighbor.

He said: "Tell you about it. Has an uncle, old skinflint, about eighty years old, Reuben White. He offered your Captain to leave him all his fortune if he would give up the army and live with him."

THE MIND-READER

“And,” I asked, “give up the woman?”

“No; but marry and live with him. The Captain won’t do it. Now that does seem silly. Don’t you think so?”

“No. She would starve, and Mr. White may live for years and make a dozen wills.” But beyond that I said I had no material for judging.

“Well, it’s simple. The old man tells every one about it. He has never given away a dollar,—says he can’t,—and is so pleased with his generous post-mortem intentions that—well, he told me all about it at a board meeting last week. The Captain was to leave the army and to live with him and take care of his estate till he dies. Then he was to get it all; the Captain to marry or not, as he pleased. Would n’t you accept?”

I said: “No. He asks a man already distinguished to give up all his reasonable ambitions, and, if he married, to submit his wife to the certainty of a miser’s whims and meanness. I am sure that Captain Fernwood will

THE MIND-READER

not do it; besides, White promises the library and the hospital. You can't trust him."

"Well, Fernwood won't, and the old man is furious. Three days ago I witnessed the will he made. He informed us with pride that he had drawn the will himself. In fact, he had studied law when young. He told his nephew in my presence that he had left him ten thousand dollars. Oh, by the way, he had old Quarton there as a witness. It seems he thought he had to sign his name in full. Asked me if he must. Of course I said yes. Lord! he hated it; but he signed at last, Duodecimo Quarton. That, he explained, was because he was such a little baby. Lord, I was sorry for him. You see, his father was a librarian. Oh, about the will. He tells everybody that a large part goes to the Central Hospital and that he has remembered other charities. This was all in Mr. White's bedroom. The Captain locked the will in the desk, and gave the key to his uncle, but said, 'Better put it in the trust company's safe.'

THE MIND-READER

Then the Captain took away some bills and checks to pay them. He did not seem angry. That old fellow uses him, I can assure you. What a fool!"

"No," I said, "he had made his choice."

"But think of it—a million or two! I can admire such virtue; I could not imitate it."

He went out to radiate news elsewhere, murmuring, "Extraordinary, most extraordinary!"

A day or two later the Captain came to my room in the evening, and for the first time without an invitation. I was pleased with this sign of desire for my company, and as usual we fell into talk which took wide ranges of interest. At last he asked me where he could find the singular Chinese doctrines of the pulse, explaining, what I had not as yet heard, that while in Philadelphia on duty he had attended medical lectures, a dangerous study for a sensible layman. I referred him to Sir John Floyer's "Pulse Watch," and then said, "By the way, you spent some time over Fludd's book."

THE MIND-READER

“Yes, I did.”

“Well, as I mentioned, Miss Musgrave asked for it later.”

“Yes; rather peculiar for a woman, was n't it?”

“Rather. I do not fancy she enjoyed it. The queerest thing is that, since she returned it a month ago, it was asked for by a stranger, and has disappeared. That is, one of the volumes—the one which contains illustrations. This is a not uncommon form of theft, and of late we have suffered several such losses.”

“What can you—what do you do?”

“I was asked to take up the whole matter. I employed a clever detective. He failed me entirely, but my luck did not. I saw in the ‘Review of Psychology,’ published in Chicago, an essay on mystics in which Fludd was quoted and the edition given. I wrote to the author who courteously returned our missing volume, which he had bought from a scamp of a dealer in this city. I set my detective on the track and he will be here shortly with two

THE MIND-READER

other of our missing books. The thief was easily traced, and is now awaiting trial. I should think this tale of a book's adventures would amuse you."

Then the talk wandered on to other matters, and quite late he went away.

Two days after this talk, Miss Musgrave came for a book. After getting it, she said: "A friend of mine told me of your loss of that curious book by Fludd. Have you ever heard of it again?"

"Yes," I said. She had evidently heard from her lover of our talk, for she remarked: "If I were a clever writer, I should write the adventures of a book—how it helped this one or hurt that one."

"What a clever idea!" I returned.

"Well," she said, "if ever I am in trouble or have lost anything, I shall come to you for advice. I think you were ingenious. Mr. Stevens says you are a mind-reader."

"Does he? Every one is more or less that, Miss Musgrave. Shall I try to read your thoughts?"

THE MIND-READER

“Oh, no; please don’t,” and she went away laughing.

FERNWOOD’S visits became frequent and the more I saw of him the better did I like him. At last, one evening, after a long talk and just before he left he said: “I regret that I shall very soon be ordered away and lose both the library and your company in some bookless Western post. However, that is my life, and I cannot complain, or would not except that—”

As he paused, I said, smiling: “Except for Miss Musgrave.” I liked the man, and was curiously pleased when he said: “Then you knew.” There was no reason why I should not have known at any time in the last more intimate months unless for the almost feminine reserve with which he guarded his increasingly close relations with me and others.

I said in reply that Mr. Burke had told me.

“Yes, all of Miss Musgrave’s friends know of it. If you talked with Burke,”—and he smiled,—“I suppose there is very little you do not know either about her or me.”

THE MIND-READER

I laughed. "Nothing that I did not like. Nothing that is not common property."

"Yes, the old fellow is generous in the diffusion of what were perhaps better left untold. But I must go. I shall miss you much. I am engaged to Miss Musgrave, and I hope soon to be married." Then, with some hesitation, he added: "Did Mr. Burke speak of my uncle?"

"He did; and let me say, as you open the subject, that I think you are right. It is in some sense a sacrifice."

"Oh, no. I could not take my wife to live with my uncle. How could I? I will not give up my profession. Miss Musgrave agrees with me. It is in no sense a sacrifice. But now I must go. Good night!"

"And so," said I to myself, "I have made my capture, and the man is worth the trouble." And now I was to lose this friend.

At the time of which I write I had been thrown very little with women, but since then, considering the question of the values of friendships, I conclude that the best friends

THE MIND-READER

are women in middle age. The range of their values is other than that of men, but there are many things of which one may talk to them and which with men one approaches in a spirit of reserve. Indeed, as I have elsewhere said, women are the natural confessors of men.

The sudden frank opening to me of Fernwood's heart was a disclosure of the feminine traits of a brave and reticent man. It was, in a way, a compliment, and gratified me, as all such conquests do, and the more so because in the solitude that any great city is for a newcomer I had no one else who held to me the relation of friend. I sat with my pipe, and wondered what manner of woman was Miss Musgrave. I had, in my brief official acquaintance, found her an interesting, well-bred person, evidently of a social class which had had the advantages of generations of ease and training. With this I dismissed her and her lover, and turned to some deferred library work, little dreaming of the extent to which I was about to be involved in their lives.

About this time I was sent to a remote city

THE MIND-READER

to attend an important sale of books. I was kept busy for four days, and as I rarely do more than glance at the papers, I chanced not to observe the paragraphs which might have prepared me for the disaster of which I learned upon my return.

I arrived at the library about nine in the evening. The janitor said: "There is a lady waiting to see you, sir. She is in your room. She has been there an hour. As she often comes to get books, and I have seen you talking to her, I let her into your study. Have you heard the awful news of Mr. White's death?"

"No, I have not. I am very sorry." Then in haste I went up-stairs, with an inexplicable presentiment of calamity.

When I entered the room, a maid was seated near the door. Her mistress, Miss Musgrave, rose and came forward to meet me, saying:

"It seemed to me as if you would never come. Can you give me a half-hour? I—we are in great trouble, and Captain Fernwood has asked me to see you." Then as I said,

THE MIND-READER

“Of course,” she asked the maid to wait for her down-stairs. When alone, I said, “What is the trouble?”

“You have not heard?”

“No. I have been away. Tell me, is he ill?”

“Yes, and worse, and we were so happy. It seems incredible that you have never heard. It is too awful,” she exclaimed.

It seemed to me natural that she should at once inform me, but there was a half-evident desire to put it off. Indeed, for a moment she was silent, as if gathering resolution. I waited and then said:

“Now, Miss Musgrave, tell me quietly and fully what is the matter, and let me say that I am entirely at your disposal.”

“He said so. He has no other friends here, no family—oh, I said once I should come to you if ever I needed help!”

“You say he has no friends. His uncle, I hear, is dead.”

“Good heavens, yes—murdered!”

“Stop,” I said. “I know nothing. To help

THE MIND-READER

you, I must have a clear, definite statement."

"Yes, I know. I see."

She sat up and said simply: "This is all we really know. On Monday last, George spent an hour with me. Then he went, as he generally did at least every other night, to see his uncle. That was about nine. He had collected some money for him that day. He put it in his uncle's desk, noticed his will lying in it, locked the desk, and put the key in his uncle's waistcoat, which hung on a chair. He said, 'You should put your will, sir, in the safe at the Union Trust Company.' Oh, I can't go on! You must see Captain Fernwood at once, please. I want you to see George. He is in a dreadful state. You will see him, won't you—at once, to-night?"

I said, "Yes, of course. Let me walk home with you."

"No. I have a carriage. I will leave you at George's."

As we drove along, neither spoke. What she could not or would not speak of I too easily

THE MIND-READER

comprehended. There was the common and often terrible situation of the man who is known to have been last with the murdered and who cannot prove an alibi.

III

NO study of character prepared me for the effect on Fernwood. Under this terror, the woman was of a sudden strong, resolute, combative. Under it, the man who was a proverb in his corps for cool courage was broken, nerveless, and timid.

Indeed, what I saw as I entered his room was enough to create pity and to make it needful to exercise the large charity of the physician to lessen the sense of surprise with which one saw a man in the vigor of health so easily routed. Long pain and the bodily feebleness due to disease or wounds often take from a man his moral weapons, and leave him with neither sword nor shield. But this man, in the midst of health and in the sunshine of a rare woman's love, splendidly able to put aside wealth, was like a strong battle-ship on the rocks, a helpless prey of the sea. I saw it all

THE MIND-READER

at a glance as I entered his room. He sat crouched low in a chair by the wood fire, without other light. As I approached, he turned his head, looked at me, and resumed his attitude of defeat, his head in his hands, his elbow on his knees. I went to the mantel, found a match, and lighted two gas-jets. Then I drew a chair and sat down beside him. He said not a word as I took his hand. His pulse was eloquent of his condition. I saw at once that the physician must prepare the way for the friend. I said: "You have not slept and you have not eaten."

"No. Not for three days."

"Well, that won't do. I want to talk to you, but now you are in no fit case for talk. Come with me to my rooms."

"No; I am watched. I should be arrested."

I persisted, and at last he consented; but he staggered as he rose, saying, "It is useless," and yet he went.

When at last we were in my study, I made him take a pretty stiff glass of whisky and, with more difficulty, a couple of biscuits. The

THE MIND-READER

influence of the stimulus was interesting and rapid. I said but little, and nothing of the cause of his condition. But after some twenty minutes he sat up and said: "Do you think they followed us?" and then: "I wish you would lock the door." It was childlike, but I did so. Then I returned to my seat, and quietly lighted my pipe and waited. Five minutes went by before he said: "Why did you make me come here? They will think I ran away."

"No. I shall say where you are. You must stay with me."

"May I have some more whisky?"

"Certainly."

He took it again, and of his own will ate greedily of the biscuits. We were silent. In the way the stimulus and food restored the man's moral vigor with the physical gain in strength, there was something which I felt should have given him a reproachful sense of humiliation at the ease with which he had been crushed. He said suddenly, "Would you mind if I smoked?"

THE MIND-READER

“No,” I said, and gave him a cigar. “And now let us talk. You must tell me all about it. You sent for me, and I came. I am your friend, and with what I have heard I am prepared, as you are not, to consider calmly this absurd situation. I beg of you not to get excited or explain or reason on the case. Give me the cold facts. Can you, or shall we wait until to-morrow?”

“Oh, no; I do not want to wait. I am absolutely alone here. I have no man but you to whom I can turn. I do not make friends easily. My uncle was my only relative. I want to ask advice. I want to know how it looks to you. Miss Musgrave’s aunt is useless, of course. I have no one—no one.”

I saw how vast was the artificial gain of the hour; I knew, too, that it would not last.

“Go on,” I said. He laid down his cigar, and went on to state with amazing absence of visible emotion the whole tragic story.

“About two weeks from the time he made his will, on Monday night, I gave my uncle \$745.50, a delayed payment of interest which

THE MIND-READER

I had collected on a mortgage. You may not know that he has made this kind of use of me ever since I came to the city. At first he used to say it was merely taking care of my own property, but since—”

Here I said: “Do not explain. That may come later. Now I want only the recent bare facts.”

“Very well, you shall have them.”

My witness was still improving.

“When I called on Monday night, my uncle was in bed. Of late he was much of the time in bed. I put the money in his desk, and locked it and put the key in his waistcoat pocket. I said, ‘I see your will, sir, is still in the desk.’ It was in an envelop, labeled and sealed. I said, ‘It should be in your bank safe.’ He said, ‘Yes; I shall see to that tomorrow. You have only to change your mind, and I will burn that will.’

“I said no, and that I begged he would not reopen a question to which I could make only one reply. He said I was a fool. I made no answer. The fact is, I think that—”

THE MIND-READER

Once again I broke in. "Facts," I said, "facts."

This time the man actually smiled as he returned, "What are you doing?"

I had taken up pencil and note-tablet.

"I am about to take down in shorthand what you tell me."

I was fairly expert at this.

"Go on."

"I read the larger part of the stock-list to my uncle and one or two editorials. After this, as he was evidently sleepy, I said: 'Good night, sir. Don't forget to bolt your door.'

"The old housemaid, his only servant, had gone to bed. In the hall I saw that the tall clock was marking eleven. I put out the gas and went away, leaving the hall door, as usual, unlocked, the maid having gone to bed. I think I said that it was a common occurrence. I walked to my rooms, let myself in, and seeing no one, went to bed.

"At half after seven in the morning I was awakened and told that a policeman wanted to

THE MIND-READER

see me. I dressed in haste, and found the man outside.

“He said, ‘Mr. Fernwood, your uncle was found dead on the floor this morning.’

“He had not seen him, and could tell me nothing more. I found two policemen in the hall, and up-stairs in the room a captain of police and others.

“I said, ‘I am Captain Fernwood, Mr. White’s nephew.’ My uncle lay in his night-dress, dead on the floor, his head near the fire-place, and close by the poker. There was a cut on his left temple. I was about to feel it, to see if there were a fracture, when the captain of police said: ‘Don’t touch him. The coroner will be here.’

“I rose, and the man said: ‘It may have been an accident or a murder. The desk has been broken open.’

“I turned, and saw that it had been rudely handled. It was open, the money gone, and the will also. I looked about among the few other papers which lay scattered on the floor, but was warned to touch nothing. I felt sure,

THE MIND-READER

however, that the will was not among them. Then for the first time I began to feel—”

“Stop,” I said. “Stick to the facts.”

“I sat down and waited. It was hours before the coroner came, and late in the afternoon before the inquest was held. I never left the house. At the inquest the maid swore to my presence the night before, to ignorance as to when I had left, and to finding the chamber door unlocked at 7 A. M., when, as usual, she went to call Mr. White, and, seeing him on the floor, ran screaming into the street. The street door was often left unlocked. I told you that.

“I stated in turn the facts of my visit and felt at once that I had better speak of the contents of the desk. When I spoke of the will, a juror desired to know what I knew about it. I said it left me, as I had been told, by my uncle, ten thousand dollars, the maid the same amount, the rest to charities—or at least so my uncle had said. What else there was I had not been told. A juror asked if Mr. White had other near relatives. I said none. I was then

THE MIND-READER

asked concerning my relations with my uncle. On this I stated the circumstances which occasioned him to make the will. Asked if we had quarreled, I said no; he had been liberal to my mother, and although he was angry and disappointed, our intercourse had remained pleasant, on my part at least. Asked if I had felt disappointed about the will, I said yes, but that I considered my course reasonable. Asked if there were no will, who would inherit, I replied that I should in that case be the sole heir. During the day I was not allowed to reënter the room. A post-mortem section showed that the wound on the head was only a surface injury, and could not have been the cause of death. He might have been struck, and, as he was over eighty years old, have fallen when hit, and died easily enough. The verdict stated the fact of the robbery and the belief of the jury that Reuben White came to his death through violence at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

"Was there," I asked, "any evidence of burglary?"

THE MIND-READER

“No. The maid, who herself is old and stupid, swore that she had, as usual, locked up the back of the house and that the silver on the sideboard, in the dining-room, some of it old and valuable, had not been taken. The only taste my uncle allowed himself was for old silver, in which he was an expert.”

“And now,” I said, “a question or two. Be careful how you reply. Did you tell them you locked the desk and where you put the key?”

“Yes, and they found it. A juror said, ‘Only a burglar, a man in fear and haste, would have broken the desk.’ Another said, ‘Unless he wanted to simulate a burglary, and knew all the while where to look for the key.’ Here the coroner stopped them, but it was clear that everything pointed to me as the criminal. I had killed my uncle. I had stolen the will.

“I went away horror-stricken. I walked from place to place and far out into the country. At evening I came home. The next day I forced myself to go to the house and arrange for the funeral. The maid and a friend of hers, whom she had asked to remain with her,

THE MIND-READER

stared at me with horrible curiosity. The old woman was weeping over the loss of her legacy. I left them. Before night I became sure that I was shadowed. My God! the shadow of a murderer! I have not left the house since. I have not slept at all. I have eaten nothing in two days. I wrote Miss Musgrave that our engagement was at an end. She will not hear to it. She came to see me at once, and this is all."

My pencil had been busy. I had had no time to think.

I said now: "You must go to bed, and here in my room. I shall send for your things tomorrow."

He yielded with childlike submissiveness. When I had him safe in bed, I brought him a tablespoonful of whisky in which I had dissolved a small dose of morphia. I closed the door and sat down to think, and the more I thought, the less I liked the outlook. At last I tried to put myself in his place. If he had meant to steal the will, it was at any time easy but useless and perilous to do so while his uncle

THE MIND-READER

lived. Suppose him to have lingered in the house intending later to kill, and been confronted by his uncle awake, the rest would follow. I had gone along a track which would be surely that of any one who did not know Fernwood. To me it was inconceivable. But what next? Burglary. The old man wakes, is struck down. The desk is opened, the money found. I put myself in the burglar's mental skin. I see the will. It is labeled, "Will of Reuben White." I read it by my lantern. I am intelligent enough to know its possible value. In my dread of discovery, and with the dead man at my feet, I make haste to leave. But why neglect the silver? Here my venture into the stranger land of an unknown man's personality failed me. As I have said, my essays on criminal character which attracted much attention some years ago, had been the result of long study and much experience when I was, as a younger man, in medical charge of the Central Penitentiary.

It is easy to classify criminal types, but no experience of the class and the genera and

THE MIND-READER

species will enable one entirely to understand surely the motives which govern them while engaged in illegal acts. Here as elsewhere in life the ever-present factor of individual difference may make prediction difficult.

In the case I now considered there was action which seemed to me unlike that of the ordinary burglar. By this time I had begun to be deeply interested. Both head and heart were in the game which any friend of Fernwood must play against the theory I was sure the police would hold. I knew that I should need help, and that I should like to go over the house of the dead man. I wrote a note, asking Mr. South, the detective, to call on me during the evening of the next day, and went out and mailed it.

On my return I assured myself that Fernwood was asleep. At six next morning I called him. He was confused for a moment as he came out of the borderland between sleep and the wakened state. He said: "I was bothered for a little by my surroundings, but

THE MIND-READER

now I am better. What a fool I was yesterday!"

"Do not talk," I said. "Dress. The bath is ready. We can talk at breakfast."

IV

WHEN he entered my study, although pale and anxious-looking, he was better than I could have expected. The janitor's wife provided, as usual, coffee, eggs, and bread and butter. He sat down, and with too obvious assumption of his usual courteous manner apologized for the trouble he had given. I declined to talk of his present situation, and when he had finished a fairly good meal, I said, "Come with me." He was at once alarmed, and I saw that he was still far from the state of competence I desired.

However, we went down-stairs, I saying: "You use the wheel. I have borrowed our janitor's. I have mine."

He looked up and down the street, and seeing no one, mounted. We went away some four miles into the country, and then back, and I saw, as we returned, that the exercise had

THE MIND-READER

brought color into his face. He remonstrated as I turned away from the library, and crossing the still quiet city, stopped at the door of his uncle's house. Fernwood hesitated, but when I insisted, rang the bell. The old woman who let us in looked at him as if in doubt and said: "I was n't to let any one in. That's what the police said." The man in charge had gone away for his breakfast.

I replied, "The Captain has every right to go where he pleases in this house, and I am his friend." She grumbled about our getting her into trouble, but as I insisted, went with us, while I inspected the house with care. I learned nothing of value. Last I went into the room of the dead owner. Fernwood looked about him, and then abruptly turned and went out. The old woman said to me, "He's afraid, and I don't wonder." She had made up her mind that he was suffering the terror of guilt. I said: "Nonsense! The man is ill."

I had gained nothing by my visit. I saw that in my desire to utilize his knowledge of the house, I had only learned how deeply he

THE MIND-READER

was wounded and how close he had come to the boundaries beyond which a man may not pass without becoming a minority of one in the country of the sane.

I said, "Come back with me a moment." When within, I asked to go once more into the dining-room. I said, "Susan, where was the silver kept?"

"Oh, some in the bank and some here on the sideboard. It was all right that morning. I cleaned it the day before. He was mighty particular about that."

"Where is it now?"

"I put it away, there were so many people about."

"Could I see it?"

A five-dollar note relieved her mind, and we went up-stairs. It was in flannel bags. I looked it over piece by piece. At last I carefully studied a fine Queen Anne tankard.

Then the old woman said: "That was on a chair the morning after the murder. I might have set it there. No, burglars would n't have left this silver."



"SUSAN, WHERE WAS THE SILVER KEPT?"

THE MIND-READER

"Some one has handled it," I said.

"Well, I did n't, except by the handle."

"Some one did," I insisted, and we went away.

My friend was again becoming nervous, and my remark on the significant observation of the silver having been handled did no good.

I said: "Fernwood, if you let yourself go to pieces in this way, you will end by making a lot of idiots think you are really a criminal. We are only at the beginning of an affair which will need cool heads and intelligent management, and now you are behaving like a scared child or an hysterical girl. You have really nothing to fear."

"Do you think that? I do not mind telling you that what I fear is that I may come to believe I—I killed him. It does look so likely. I have heard of such cases, and even now—I—"

"Good gracious! Do you want to make me regret that I mean to see this thing through?"

He came over to where I stood and put a hand on my shoulder. He said: "You must

THE MIND-READER

forgive me, and you will, if you think of the hopeless misery of my condition."

"All right," I said. "Now I must go. We will lunch and dine at a little Italian restaurant near by; but, my dear fellow, I want you clear of head, because we are to have a talk to-night with South. I sent for him."

"I will try," he said, and appeared relieved by the prospect of something being done. I went to my work, uneasy and feeling that we were in deep water.

When we went out to lunch, I saw South, the detective, come out of a tobacco shop opposite the library. I said to the Captain, "Wait a moment," and crossing over, said to South, "Are you watching Captain Fernwood?"

He said, "Yes. It is very stupid, but those are my orders."

"Well," I said, "you know me. He will appear when wanted. You may as well go home, but turn up at nine to-night. I want to ask your advice about him."

He whistled low. "Well, that's funny. We are on the other side."

THE MIND-READER

"There is no other side."

"Yes; that Hospital Board. They say he has told them over and over they were to get most of his money."

"Well, we will talk it over."

"Very good," he said, and sauntered up the street, while I rejoined Fernwood.

To my surprise, he said: "I saw that man the day but one after—after—my uncle died. Is he watching me?"

I thought better to say yes, frankly.

"It 's a strange thing to know. He had better take care."

"Wait a little," I said. "We will get him on our side," and we went on to lunch, the Captain now and then looking back suspiciously.

A little before nine that night I asked him to go into my bedroom and wait there until I called him. He asked for a newspaper. I knew better than to give him one. The dailies were still wildly discussing the famous case and the stolen will.

"This will do," he said, and taking a book

THE MIND-READER

from my shelves, went into the bedroom while I waited for South, my notes on the table at my side.

When he came in, I said: "Sit down, take a cigar, and run over these memoranda."—I had written them out.—"And speak low when you talk. The Captain is in my bedroom. Now read this."

In a few minutes he laid down the notes, and I said, "Now, how does this look to you?"

"Well, first, let me say I have left the police, and am with the firm of Frost, the detective agents. They are employed by that hospital to find out where that will is, if it is at all. The murder does not concern them except in a way. They want that will. You see, the old man, White, told them all about it. They think your friend has it or had it."

"Well," I said, "the fools are not all dead, but I want your opinion—your theory, if you have one."

"Well, Dr. Alston, I have none. I have talked to two of that jury, and they think your friend killed the man, or at least struck him

THE MIND-READER

and stole the will, but I have n't much respect for coroner's juries. Their notion is that he broke open the desk and disordered the room so as to simulate a burglary. When I mentioned that he had declined the old man's conditions, and at the inquest had called attention to the absence of the will, that seemed to them only a clever dodge, and one said a burglar would never have left the silver. That did seem queer to me. However, I am to be allowed to go over the house to-morrow, and I want to see the old man's servant."

"Ask to see the silver, South." And there-upon I told him what I had seen. It did not impress him.

He said: "There was, I hear, no breaking in. If burglars entered, it was easy to do so by the unlocked front door."

This was exactly what I wanted, and agreeing, I added: "Now, I want you to see the Captain. I will call him."

There was no need, for, as I spoke, the door opened, and he entered, a book in his hand. He threw it on the table, and as South rose,

THE MIND-READER

he sprang forward, and catching him by the throat, shook him with savage violence, crying, "So you are set to watch me, you hound!"

The big detective stood still as I caught Fernwood's arm, and said, "Are you insane?" He let go his grip and turned.

"No. I am sane enough, and no man shall follow me as this man has done."

I pushed him down into a chair, saying: "Mr. South is here to help us. He is only obeying orders; but he does not believe you guilty."

"Is that so, Mr. South? Let him say so. He's got to say so."

I knew South too well to think he would lie, and I was immensely relieved when he said quietly, "I believe, sir, that you are an innocent man."

"Thank God for that! That accursed book upset me."

I glanced at it. What evil fate had made him choose it? It was "Eugene Aram."

"Well," I said, "you owe Mr. South an apology."

THE MIND-READER

“He has it, and my gratitude,” said Fernwood, in his courteous way. “I am sorry, but—”

“Let us talk,” I said.

“No,” returned South, readjusting his necktie; “not now. To-morrow, perhaps, after I have seen the house. Only one question: Did you often leave without the woman following you to lock the front door?”

“Yes; because commonly I was late and she in bed. I spoke of it once or twice, but my uncle said no burglars ever came in from the front.”

“No; that is true as a rule. We shall pull through, Captain.”

My friend looked up and said: “It is an unspeakable relief to hear you say that. If the will is never found, I cannot, I could not, take the money; or if I did take his fortune, and gave it to the hospital, that would be sure to be looked upon as the act of a repentant man. I have one hope, and it is that whoever stole the will did so in order to sell it to the hospital.”

“Or to you,” said South.

THE MIND-READER

"I see. To give me the chance to burn it."

"That's about it, sir. Well, good-night, and I just want to say this. I was n't clear about this matter. Now I am. Keep cool, and don't read the papers."

Said Fernwood, with his pleasant smile, "Let me again ask you to excuse my violence."

"Why, sir," said the big man, "it was just that settled the matter for me. If you had been guilty, you would not have come down on me like that."

"I should not."

I said, "*Argumentum ad hominem.*"

"What's that?" said South.

I failed to be able to put it more clearly, and for the first time we all three laughed. I went down-stairs and talked to South for half an hour about Fernwood and his well-known act of venturing out under a heavy fire, putting a tourniquet on Major Warde, and carrying him into our lines, although himself slightly wounded.

"That's the scar on his cheek."

"Yes."

THE MIND-READER

“Well, well, men are queer, and that man to be broke up this way!”

“And would not you be?”

“I might. There really are several kinds of courage. He was upset a bit by the jury inquest, and the average reporter was sure to consider that an evidence of crime.”

When I went up-stairs I quietly opened my bedroom door. Fernwood was on his knees. I closed the door and sat down with my pipe, with thankful hope in my mind.

I administered my remedy of the bicycle next day, and left my friend after breakfast, asking him to make a copy of a long list of new books to be bought, which otherwise, I assured him I should have to make myself. He seemed glad to be of use to me, and thenceforward I managed to keep him busy and at times even interested.

When again I saw South, he said, “I have asked to be relieved from further service of the hospital trustees and am now entirely at your command.” I thanked him. “Well, sir,” he said, “you are right: the silver had been

THE MIND-READER

handled. The mug—what she calls the tankard—had been picked up from the sideboard and left on the chair. They meant to return and take it all. The man's death scared them, and as they had the money—seven hundred and fifty, was it?—a good haul.”

“And the will,” I said.

“Yes. That is the interesting part. Talk about that later. Then they left as they came. We are only at the beginning of a very difficult business. The next move must come from the burglars, and they won't hurry. But with what I can now say to the chief there will be no arrest of your friend; but he will have to be patient. After I see the chief and my own people, I shall be able to advise you further. Now, I don't want to talk or to let this evidence get out. The thieves read the papers industriously, and they know of the general police belief that the Captain took the will, and so at present they are at ease and can wait.”

Then he added, turning to Fernwood: “The house was entered by the front door.

THE MIND-READER

They saw and meant to take the silver." He went on to state the case as it now stood.

Meanwhile the Captain sat moveless, intensely attentive. When South ended, he said: "I see it now. It was not alone my uncle's death that sent them away in a hurry. The man who saw that will know that he had a prize. The silver became of small moment."

I heard him with surprise and relief. Here was the quiet, reasoning man I first knew, acute, intelligent, himself again.

South had only affirmative comment, and left me to advise my friend to be patient, as now we had to play a waiting game.

Fernwood had, of course, seen Miss Musgrave often, and now I advised him to go in the evening, and in confidence to tell her that we were on the track of the burglars.

Still, I was far from being at ease. I was at the end of my mental resources, and was merely anxious as to the way I should keep him quiet. What with the bicycle rides in the country, when Miss Musgrave went with us,

THE MIND-READER

and throwing upon him work in connection with the books of our library, I succeeded as well as one could expect to succeed with a sensitive man over whom hung so dark a cloud. He insisted, however, on learning whenever anything new turned up, and I, on my part, agreed to this on condition of complete submissiveness to my orders.

To keep faith with him, as soon as I heard again from South, I asked him to meet us at my room. This was a day or two later. At this time South said: "There have been several long consultations with the chief of the city detective force, and here is where we stand. My own people are sure I am right. The chief is still in doubt. The trustees of the hospital want to advertise and offer a reward for the return of the will; but some of these old gentlemen say it is useless, because you have it. They ended by agreeing to wait. You, too, must wait."

"If," said Fernwood, thoughtfully, "I were to claim the estate on the final failure to recover the will and were to turn it over to them, I

THE MIND-READER

should remain forever under the shadow of a tragedy which would rest unexplained."

"That seems to be on your mind, Captain," said the detective.

"It is not for a moment to be thought of," said I. "What else, Mr. South?"

"Well, sir, you know about criminals. Generally, in case of an unusual burglary, we can be pretty sure of the group in which we may find the man. According to Dr. Alston's notion, here must have been a burglar intelligent enough to see the great value of this will, which must have been short and simple and decisive enough to content him with his prize. Usually such a man has as his companion some one who is not a swell burglar, and it is here they are apt to get trapped. The second fellow does n't get enough, or he drinks and talks. It is just here we are at a loss. There are several we might suspect, but some of them are in jail or have disappeared. We have simply got to wait."

And wait we did until, despite my care, Fernwood was looking worried and was no

THE MIND-READER

longer manageable. He told Miss Musgrave, to her horror, that he now believed he had killed his uncle, and as to the will, he did n't know. He must have taken it. I became alarmed, and meanwhile a lawyer had failed to help us. We had only to wait. I was in despair. I had heard of such cases, and saw that my friend was on the way to become insane. Once he declared that he meant to confess.

“If,” said South, “he judges others by himself, the man who has the will is going to fish first for the Captain. If not, he will try the hospital trustees, and that’s all there is of it just now. He’s got first to divide that seven hundred and fifty and spend his share.”

The days which went by without further incident must have been for Fernwood the most trying time of his life, but what with work—and I kept him busy—and exercise, and above all the quiet wholesomeness of Miss Musgrave’s influence, we lived it out. His impatience under continued suspicion and the difficulty in keeping the trustees tranquil re-

THE MIND-READER

sulted at last in a determination on the part of Fernwood to free himself from any relation to the great estate involved. I was now, at last, so alarmed at his condition, that I reluctantly consented. A legal paper was drawn up by which he, Fernwood, conveyed to the hospital trustees his entire interest in his uncle's property, conditioned upon their paying over to the housekeeper ten thousand dollars.

When this should be made known, the will would become of far less moment. I did not like it, but he was so uneasy that I began to have grave fears lest his reason might give way. Indeed, as we walked to the office of the president of the board, he said to me: "I am again haunted by the idea that perhaps I really did that thing. If I am not relieved in some way I shall lose my mind or say I did it. I am not sure."

"I hope," said I, laughing, "if you lose your mind, that in that case I shall find it."

"Oh, don't joke about it," he returned, and we went up-stairs to the office of the president.

Mr. Daingerfield, the old gentleman with

THE MIND-READER

the shiny bald head, which apparently attracted the early flies, asked us to sit down, put on his spectacles, and industriously beat off the flies with a large palm-leaf fan.

“Well,” he said rather gruffly, “you want to see me? I supposed you would.”

Fernwood was at his best, gentle, courteous, and quiet.

“Yes,” he said, “I have come to propose to you an arrangement with your board which I am sure—”

To my surprise the old man stood up, and, interrupting him, exclaimed: “We will make no compromise. None. I am amazed that you should for a moment think it possible.”

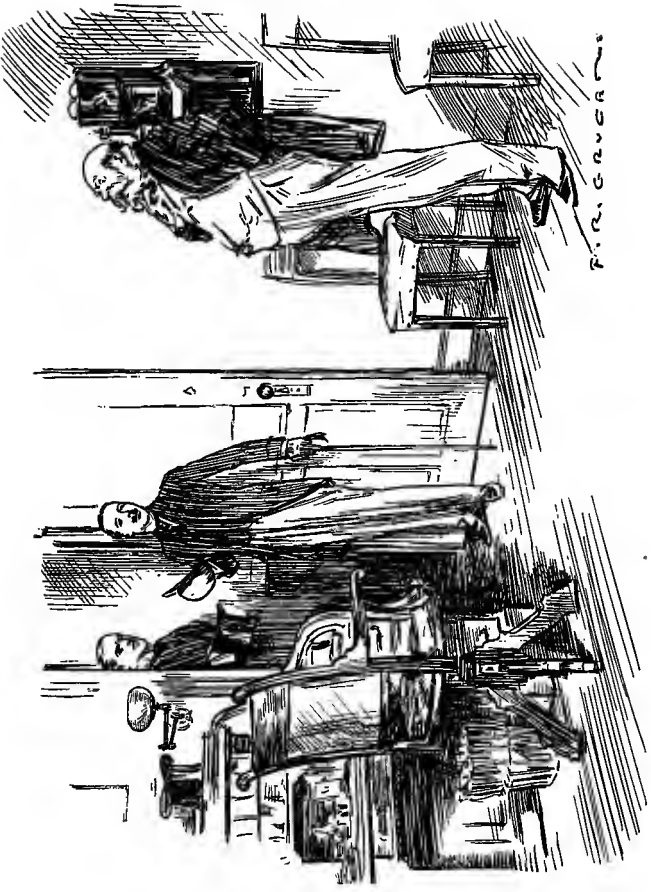
“Had you not better hear first what I have to say?”

“No, sir. I have no desire to deal with you at all. We expected some advance of this nature.”

“Of what nature?”

“No matter what. A will is lost by which the poor would have profited and the man who,

THE GARDEN



THE MIND-READER

if it never turns up, will get the estate under circumstances which—”

Fernwood rose, but, to my satisfaction, quiet and cool. He unrolled the deed as he said: “I am a gentleman placed by disastrous circumstances under suspicion of murder and theft. Even the most unkindly man should, in the total absence of proof, feel for me. You, an old man, simply insult me without even having the patience and charity to listen. The deed I hold conveys to your board my entire interest in my late uncle’s estate and leaves me without a penny.”

As he spoke, he tore the paper to pieces, and was about to cast it into the waste-basket, but smiled and crammed it into his pocket, saying: “I hope that you will be able to explain this matter to your board. I shall have the pleasure to let them hear of it by letter.”

The old man cried out: “But I could not have imagined—sit down. Sit down, sir!”

“No,” said the Captain, and we left Mr. Daingerfield standing forgetful of the atten-

THE MIND-READER

tive flies and exclaiming, "Good gracious!" and apparently confused out of possibility of other utterance.

"Well," I said to Fernwood, "are you satisfied?"

"Entirely."

It did him good, and afforded him the only bit of humorous incident which this too tragic affair supplied.

That afternoon I saw Miss Musgrave. She sat with Fernwood a while in my sitting-room and then came down to the delivery-office and asked for me. I took her into my private room, where she began to question me about what would become of the estate if Fernwood should decline to claim it. He had already made the same inquiry. I said I did not know, but that there was a book—a law book on wills—which would tell us. I would get it. It was one of the issues of this complicated affair in which I too felt some interest.

"Oddly enough," the attendant said, "a gentleman asked for that book half an hour ago.

THE MIND-READER

He is over there at the table under the windows.”

It was near by, and I glanced at the reader. He was, as I remember, a neatly clad man in black clothes, and because of being clean shaven, somehow reminded me of a Catholic priest. He was making notes in a little book. I noticed that he wore in a black neck-scarf a large diamond or paste pin. I had a moment of wonder, because it struck a note of difference from his lean face and the rather simple costume.

Miss Musgrave and I got little information out of the book, and as we were in agreement as regarded too constant, direct, and useless discussion of our troubles, we fell into other talk. This came of my remarking upon the way in which a crime or any other such matter called upon the resources of a library. Several persons had recently busied themselves in the library with this question of unclaimed estates and lost wills.

The day after, a typewritten letter from

THE MIND-READER

Boston addressed to me made me summon South at once. He read it aloud.

“Dear Sir: I hear a certain document interests you. Answer in next Tuesday’s ‘New York Herald,’ and say ‘Yes, it does. A. B.’ Then you will hear further. X.”

“But why me?” said I.

“Well, that beats me,” replied South. “Of course this was purposely mailed in Boston. He should have asked for an answer there. Very likely he is here. He has spent that seven hundred and fifty.”

“What do you advise?” said I. “It is getting more and more strange.”

“Answer him as he says, and then wait. To-night I am going to take a look at some of the resorts of the upper class of burglars. Of course it is often done, but the men lately concerned in big robberies keep dark for a while. Sometimes the hangers-on of the swell rascals get picked up in these dens. The upper set, and there are n’t many, put on style and go to second-rate hotels or live very quietly out

THE MIND-READER

of town. However, I mean to take a look. Like to go with me? Gentleman from Chicago wanting to see the city."

I said: "Yes. I should like to go."

Fernwood declined, as I supposed he would.

I have no desire to describe the haunts of those I saw that evening. They had interest for an old student of the class which has only one reason for resisting temptation, and again, as often before, I was struck with the exterior order and, in one resort, with the cleanliness of the saloon. I was amused, too, at South's classification. "It is of no use, or generally of no use," he said, "to look for the boss of a big job here." This he said as we came out of the worst of the dens. "Those fellows are the common lot, sneak thieves and so on. They are always poor, hand-to-mouth fellows."

"Yes," I replied. "The uncertain day-laborers of crime. Sad analogy," I murmured as we moved away.

South was like a botanist in the country. He knew where to look for this weed or that,

THE MIND-READER

and spoke, like the very decent fellow he was, of the women who, themselves degraded, help to degrade.

It was eleven at night, when, having made nothing by our quest, we went to get a mug of beer at one of the well-known cafés in the lower part of the city. South, as we sat, began to exercise curiosity on those about us with now and then some shrewd comment. Of a sudden he set down his half-raised mug and said: "Don't appear to look, but get a quick look at the man at the third table—the one nearest the window. He is one of our most skilled burglars. He has been in and out of jail three times, and is as likely as not to—"

"By George!" I exclaimed, "I know him. He was at the library recently, and wanted to consult a law book about wills."

"What? What?" said South. "Is that so? Come, let us go. I know the rascal well. He goes by the name of Tom Swing."

I followed him without a word. When on the pavement he said to a cabman, "I take you; wait," and drew me aside. In a few moments

THE MIND-READER

our man came out, smoking a cigar. He looked at his watch and walked swiftly away.

"Come," said South, "get in." He said to the cabman: "You see that man? Follow him at a walk. Don't lose him. Five dollars if you keep him in sight till I stop you, and don't get too near."

"All right, sir," said the man, and we drove away.

V

THE streets into which we turned were almost deserted, and the task was not difficult. "If," said South, "we tracked him on foot we might very easily alarm him. You saw him look about him as he came out. He is on his guard. Now he will never dream of being shadowed by a cab unless he is in one."

This quiet pursuit lasted some ten minutes. We were again among the slums. Our prey turned a corner. South stopped the cab, paid the driver, and saying, "It was cheap," paused a moment, put his police badge on his coat, and said to me: "Our man is, I guess, going to Joe McCoy's. I did not take you there. I only want to see who Tom will talk to. It is a mere chance."

As we turned the corner, the man was gone. "All right," said South, and I followed him into a drinking-shop. He nodded to the bar-



“TALK TO ME. TELL STORIES. LAUGH. DO ANYTHING.”

THE MIND-READER

keeper and said cheerfully: "No one wanted, Bill; gent from Chicago to see the town."

The room at the back was thick with smoke, and two thirds full of as rough a lot as I have ever seen. As we came in, our sudden entrance seemed to disturb them. The voices dropped, and South at once said: "Good evening, boys. No one wanted this time; gent from Chicago, seeing the town. Hello, Charley!" This to a ruffian near the door. He spoke to several, and last to me. "This is Tom Swing, Mr. Paxton. An ornament to his profession." Mr. Swing got up, and said very quietly in a level voice, and a not unpleasant one: "I see you still like your little joke, Mr. South; but I am out of the business. The ladies of the prison society have got me a job."

South encouraged this return to morality, and we sat down, calling for lager beer.

South had his back to Tom. I was facing him some twelve feet away. The noise of voices rose. A drunken group in a corner trolled a thieves' catch, and it was easy to talk unheard by our neighbors.

THE MIND-READER

South said to me: "The man with Tom is an old helper of his, a great brute; what we call a yeggman." He rarely used thief-slang, and the word interested me. He explained: "It is the burglar who uses violence. Swing never does. He does not even carry a revolver."

"An unusual, a rare case."

"Yes, sir; but the man is just that. He was a bank clerk and the son of a decent school-master. Don't watch him too closely. What's the matter? Take care! I think he may have remembered you. Crime does sharpen a man's memory."

"But I must watch him," I said. "Talk to me. Tell stories. Laugh. Do anything." I was excited.

"What's the matter? Mind-reading? Mr. Stevens, at the library, told me about it."

"Nonsense!" I said. "I want to watch them. Talk! talk!—anything!"

I stared at Tom while South, puzzled, obeyed my order, and did talk, while I considered with

THE MIND-READER

intense attention the two scamps. I did not think they suspected me of listening. That, in fact, was impossible. The noise was so great that a policeman looked in and said it would n't do. Then the drunken crowd broke up.

Swing, too, rose at last, nodded to South, and went out. His friend also rose unsteadily and left.

"Come," I said; "an interesting study."

South besieged me with eager questions. I contented him with a promise to talk if he would come home with me.

When in my room I called Fernwood out of bed. He asked what was the matter. I said: "Nothing wrong. Dress."

It was one o'clock when we sat down with our cigars. I hesitated as I stood by the mantel, amused at South's eagerness, and foreseeing with anticipative pleasure the relief I was about to give.

"Mr. South, tell the Captain how we found and followed Swing."

"Ominous name," said Fernwood.

THE MIND-READER

When South had our man in the saloon, I took up the story. I said: "I faced the two men, and I was near enough—"

"To hear?" said Fernwood, anxiously.

"No, not a word; but I know what they said."

"You do?" cried South. "I knew it. Mind-reading."

"Yes," I said. "I read their minds."

I was enjoying the excitement of South's face and the queer look of bewilderment on that of my friend.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Do go on."

"Well," I said, "I gathered enough. They have the will; that is sure, and they saw my reply in the paper."

"Yours?" said Fernwood, bewildered. I had not told him of the letter to me.

"Yes. The short man I could not get at quite so easily, but he assured Swing 'she' was safe, because she did not know its value. I caught bits of his talk. 'Bad thing that, the old fellow dying. He just fell when you grabbed at him; he screamed, and hit the

THE MIND-READER

fender knob.' They are puzzled what to do next. That is all I got clearly. There was more of course, but the noise and the smoke distracted my mind. It requires close study."

Fernwood turned to South. "For heaven's sake, let us end this! What will you do? Arrest them?"

South was silent a moment. "Why, Captain, the evidence is good for us, but before a magistrate any shyster of a lawyer would laugh us out of court."

Fernwood looked the disappointment he felt. He, too, was for a little silent, and then said, smiling: "Of course Dr. Alston, who has the acute sense of some animal ancestor, caught fragments of the compromising talk of these men—enough, I dare say."

Mr. South smiled the critical dissent of the better-informed mind.

"Could n't of heard, sir. Mind-reading it was, and nothing else."

"Well," said Fernwood, "no matter. It is all the artillery we have, and we ought to be able to use it."

THE MIND-READER

I watched with an expert's satisfaction the return of mental force in a man so lately stumbling on the boundary of insanity, at times quite hounded over the line by the beliefs of others and the too constant dwelling on one fatal subject. Now he was himself once more, suggestive, resourceful, and courageous.

I checked South with a lift of the hand and waited.

"Suppose," said the Captain, "you arrest Sharkey, as you call him, on a charge of murder and burglary."

"On suspicion?" said South. "We can, but it will only scare Swing. We have no available evidence, and Sharkey will simply shut up like a clam."

"No," said I, "he is the lesser scamp. Jail bird as he is, there is always a competent scare for every crow. Let me see him and tell him what I can make him believe I overheard. It was a confession and far plainer than I have told you. Let me say to Sharkey that we will arrest Swing. Why not even do that at once? Tell Sharkey he had better be first to confess

THE MIND-READER

and get a chance to escape the gallows. To have incidentally caused death during a burglary, is, as I understand it, in the eye of the law, murder."

"Yes," said South; "that's good law. I will see the chief."

"Might work, but don't mention mind-reading, South," said I.

"Of course not. He must think we overheard it—bits, you know. We must find the girl, too. If my plan works, that will be easy."

We had some further talk, and South left us. When we were alone, Fernwood came over to where I stood, set a hand on each of my shoulders, and said: "I am curious as to what you really did when you saw those villains. But first I want to say that I owe to you such a debt of gratitude as never can be paid." His eyes filled, and he sat down, overcome with such emotion as forbids speech.

I, too, was for a moment silent. I had learned to like the man and the woman. I, whom the chances of life had made a somewhat lonely man, had found a friend.

THE MIND-READER

I said: "My dear Fernwood, when I had seen you a few times I was strongly attracted. It is for me a great joy to have served a man I can completely like and, without reserve, approve. In our day the helpful resources of friendship are so few. Once you could stand by a friend in battle or express yourself in verse. Now friendship is limited to small material kindnesses, to sympathy, to money help at need; and that, strange to say, is the sharpest test to-day, and where too many fail. But I am on a subject which is often in my mind. Such a chance as ours has been, is happily rare."

"Oh, yours, yours," said Fernwood, smiling through tears. "Ah, and my dear Anne. I shall leave her to thank you."

"Well, I thank heaven that the chance fell to me. You want to know how I got inside the counsels of Swing & Co.?"

"Yes, indeed."

I laughed. "I shall tell you when we are through with this business."

THE MIND-READER

"Oh, by Jove!" cried Fernwood, with a good honest laugh, "tell me now."

"No, not yet. Now you must go to bed and with an easy mind. I want to put on paper what I gathered. Good-night."

The next afternoon South arrived. Fernwood for the first time had gone out alone on my bicycle.

"We have Sharkey," said South. "Got him easy. The chief is delighted. The man is well scared, and we shall have Swing to-night."

In half an hour I was with South in a cell at the central police station. Sharkey sat on the cot, a sullen brute. He made no reply when South said, "You are in a bad scrape this time."

Then I began. "I sat opposite to you at McCoy's. You talked to Swing about the burglary and the death at Mr. White's house. You said the girl had the will."

He looked at me and made no comment. I went on. "You wanted half of what the will would bring. Swing said, 'One third.' You said, 'More, more; too little.'"

THE MIND-READER

He grew attentive. I saw his hands open and shut uneasily. He was sweating and passed a hand across his forehead.

“Swing said you were counting your chickens before they were hatched, and that you were in liquor. He said the old man’s death made it a hard job. You said: ‘He just died. No one hurt him.’”

Then Sharkey said, “Guess you think I’m a fool.”

South caught on to this as I did not. The man felt himself clear of murder.

“Stop a moment,” South said to me. “Look here, Sharkey. You scared an old man, and he fell dead, and don’t you deceive yourself. It is murder. Swing will be taken to-night. He will tell the whole of it to save his neck. Come, doctor. The man is an idiot. He has had the first chance. Now we will give Swing his turn.”

We rose, and were half out of the door when Sharkey caught South by the arm. “I’ll tell,” he said. “Give me the chance.”

THE MIND-READER

“Well,” said South, “come to your senses, have you?”

Within an hour we had his statement under oath. It was simple. They had watched the house for several nights; knew there was but one servant, an old woman; had seen that there was a light in a third story usually put out before Fernwood left; reasoned that the front door was left unlocked from within; and had easily entered. They found and handled the silver, and left the tankard on a chair, meaning to return for this spoil. Their plan was to tie and gag the old man, get what they could, and then at last bag the silver. Mr. White may have been awake and heard them for he was up and held the poker in his hand when they came in. He cried “Murder!” and fell, striking his head on the knob of the fender. As he lay still, they did not trouble themselves to see if he were dead, but by their lantern light broke open the desk and took the money. Then Swing saw the will, and tore open the envelopes. He read it. It was brief. He

THE MIND-READER

said: "Never mind the silver. This is worth thousands." Sharkey reluctantly yielded, and they went as they came. The news of the death alarmed them. Some further threats about his position at last drew out full knowledge as to the whereabouts of the will. In the afternoon the girl was arrested, and was easily persuaded to tell where it was hidden—under the carpet in her room. It was resealed by Fernwood's wish and without being read was left in the safe in care of the chief. Swing must in some way have been alarmed, for he was long sought for in vain, but was at last arrested in St. Louis.

I had anxiously waited until the girl and the will were brought in. I hurried away in a cab to see Miss Musgrave. I told her of the happy ending of our weeks of trial, and driving with her to the library, sent her to my study that she might have the joy of entirely relieving her lover's mind.

When, in half an hour, I entered the room, Miss Musgrave rose, saying: "I want to thank our friend, and how can I—"

THE MIND-READER

For my part, I was just a little embarrassed, as I always am by thanks. I said: "Let us all go and dine together."

"Some quiet place," said Fernwood.

"Yes. Trust me."

I think no one of us has ever forgotten that dinner. Gay and glad at first, the talk soon became grave, and at last Fernwood said: "Is it not time, Alston, that we heard about the mind-reading?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Miss Musgrave. "I am so curious."

"Well," I said, "my sister was deaf and dumb, and when she was taught lip-reading, I took it up and became very expert. It may have some pretty dangerous uses. I try not to use it. The temptations it offers are too great."

"So that was it!" cried Miss Musgrave. "And I really believed it to have been mind-reading."

"Well, is it not?" I said.

As we rose from the table, Fernwood astounded the young waiter by saying: "This

THE MIND-READER

is a dinner I shall never forget. I want you to remember it," and gave him a five-dollar note.

I felt more anger at old White's folly than did his nephew; but Miss Musgrave said that with her modest income and the Captain's pay they would be better off than most army officers. They were, in fact, too happy and thankful to feel the loss of what they had never had. I said, however, that as under the will, they would get something, Fernwood must be present when it was presented for probate.

This took place two days later. The president of the hospital, several trustees, and two or three lawyers were present. The room was crowded with reporters and others, and Mr. Burke was of course present.

The president of the trust company which was the executor handed over the will to the registrar, and made the usual application through the company's legal adviser. The registrar looked it over, and then said quietly to the president of the hospital: "Mr. Daingerfield, I regret to say that this will is no more than waste paper as far as concerns the hos-

THE MIND-READER

pital. It was witnessed and signed on June first. Mr. White died July third. That is thirty-two days after. A few more days of life would have made good his gift to the hospital. Of course, gentlemen, you all know the law. Forty days must have elapsed. The estate goes in totality to the heirs at law."

Daingerfield said: "Incredible, Mr. Registrar. Mr. White was too good a business man to have made such a mistake!" A roar of laughter broke out among the reporters; the lawyers smiled; Daingerfield grew red with anger, and Mr. Burke, beside me, said: "What a glorious bull! I have not lost my time."

"I fear that you will find me correct," said the registrar, repressing his mirth. "By the way, I see that among those who benefit is Doctor Alston. A codicil gives him a hundred thousand dollars."

I looked up amazed.

Mr. Fernwood's lawyer said, "Mr. Registrar, unless there is a contest, which seems hardly possible, my client, Captain Fernwood,

THE MIND-READER

is the chief heir. There are no other relatives—none; but this is I presume a matter for the courts to decide.”

The faces of Mr. Daingerfield and his friends must have pleased my Captain if he had cared to look at them, as the old gentleman broke out: “We will fight it to the last. It is a swindle.”

Fernwood said: “Mr. Daingerfield, bad manners and an evil temper lost your hospital this estate. Be a little careful what you say. Come, doctor. Good-morning, gentlemen.”

There was, of course, no contest, and in due season my friend was in possession of some two millions.

My delightful legacy was stated in a codicil to be an expression of gratitude because of my having saved his life, and made him no charge.

In conclusion, I may say that my friends were married, and that Fernwood sent the hospital a check for one hundred thousand dollars. Then they went away to his post at San Francisco, where later I joined them, and finally became the manager of a productive mine, a part of the White estate.

THE HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

THE HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

WHEN after breakfast I lounged on the porch of the Newport House and saw the fog's gray nightcaps drift away from the Porcupine Islands, I knew myself secure of a perfect day; a day with a character—for indeed September weather at Bar Harbor leaves one with remembrance of sunshine warm enough to flatter the aging year with summer dreams, and of shade cool enough to remind one that the festal days of the year's life are over. To my regret this was the last of my holiday on the happy island. I meant it to be memorable, and had planned it with such care as the gourmet in the story gave to his last dinner on earth. I meant to walk in the morning, to sail alone in the afternoon, and return to dine where one should dine in order to end

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

perfectly a day without a break in its happiness.

I carried a mood of entire satisfaction into the afternoon, when I stood on Captain Conner's slip at Bar Harbor and felt the wholesome northwest wind's promise of the delight of a brisk sail. I was about to step into my skiff in order to go out to where the cat-boat was moored, when I heard behind me, "I say, Afton, w-want a c-crew?"

I knew the voice too well. My dream of a lonely sail was gone. I turned and saw Tom Westway coming ponderous over the float, which rocked under the weight of a rotund, short, middle-aged man, clad in faultless white flannel, a straw hat with a red ribbon shading his large, ruddy, clean shaven face. There was now as always something oddly impressive in the changeless gravity of the man. He never seemed depressed or excited, and appeared to be so wanting in alertness of mind that his success in the speculations of the grain market was as surprising to me as to others.

Now he remarked as he stood by my side,

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

“Good thing I c-came. You ’d have had to s-sail alone. Knew you ’d w-want a ’c-crew.”

I did not, but to say no to the best natured fellow I knew was quite beyond me. I did not doubt the honesty of his belief that his coming was to relieve my solitude, since to be alone was for Tom himself a serious discomfort, although why I never could say, since he was like some domestic animals which are unhappy without human company but have no need of human conversation. Man’s craving for talk varies. Tom had none. Not even the bitter of gossip could provoke an appetite. Indeed he transacted the business of life with fewer words than anybody I can recall. Someone, years ago, seeing him at the club, serene, fat, contented and silent, his arms crossed on his ample stomach, called him the club Joss. And now, on the approach of his tranquil largeness and good-natured assurance of welcome, I knew that, although I never more surely desired to be alone, I could not with decency decline his offer. There seemed to me, for a moment contemplating escape, some vague cruelty

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

in refusing the company of a man who stammered. I smiled at the thought and at the quickly added reflection that a fat man who stammered made some mysteriously larger appeal to my good-nature. My reflection would have offered the over-analytic novelist occasion for a page of psychological comment, with the usual doubt which stands for a conclusion.

“All right, Tom,” I said sweetly. “Get in,” adding something concerning the uncertainties of such as go down to the sea in cat-boats.

Tom, pleased to escape the solitude of self, merely murmured dislocated thanks and carefully got his bulky person into the skiff, which I was steadying to counterbalance his weight. When, however, we were safe in the cat-boat, free of the mooring, and the sail up, he began to ask me, with intervals of silence, how far I was going, and to desire some assurance of return in time for dinner. When he learned with whom I was to dine at Cromwell’s Cove, he seemed, and I think with reason, to feel more secure.

As we sped out between Bar Island and the

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

Porcupines into the open bay, he soon became too uncomfortably busy in keeping his place as ballast on the windward gunwale to attend to any other mental business. He bit hard on his pipe stem and now and then exclaimed, "G-Great Scott!" when the boat lay over. In fact, as the wind rose in perilous gusts and played tricks with the boom, I fancy he may have felt that a lonesome grain broker might pay too dearly for society. At last I saw that his pipe was out and that he was unaware of it. This was too real an expression of discomfort not to touch me, and although my hands were full with the viciousness of the wind I began to talk to him, with now and then an eye to the southeast where, over Green Mountain and Sargent, a low-lying range of clouds was changing from minute to minute.

In the afternoon light the early autumn yellows gave the mountains an appearance of being powdered with gold dust. I spoke of it to Tom, who said, after a reflective pause, "That's so." Then I gave him out of my musings something better to see what he would

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

do with it. I got only brief replies, usually a repetition of my queries in some slightly varied form of assent.

At last I said, "When a man is in the autumn of life, he makes wild efforts to resist decay, but here are these great forests fading with no effort to stay the march of time. It seems strange to me; and to think how we poor devils fight, when our fate is just as inevitable." What I thus offered was no way remarkable except for the comment it provoked.

For a moment the wind held steady, and, more at ease, Tom considered his pipe to see if it were alive, and then remarked, "Y-Yes. It does. It goes on and on, just like the s-slump in the wheat m-market in '91. No f-fellow could stop it, and—"

There was something exasperating in this contribution to the possibilities of human thought. What more there was I never knew, for just then the wind and a careless hand on the tiller of a sudden tipped the boat so that we took in a little water, and Tom evolved profane generalizations.

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

I supposed the talk to have come to a close, but to my surprise Tom rallied, and after a slight search in his mind, said with the consciousness of being valuably productive, "It's a g-good thing there are no m-middle-aged women in the g-grain market."

When I asked, "Why middle-aged?" Tom, refreshed by my want of intelligent apprehension, replied, "Why, d-don't you see? Most any fellow c-could see that—autumn and all that." What he meant I do not know; perhaps he did not.

Just past Badley's Point I concluded to get about for the sail home, since now we had run far to the westward up Frenchman's Bay. I was on the point of getting about when I realized that I was too late. The wind was failing and the dark summer storm long brewing over Sargent and the Bubbles was coming up from the southeast with unexpected speed. I said nothing but held my course until I had put the boat through the drawbridge, just opened for a small sloop. Then, at last, Tom began to gather the bitter fruit of a crav-

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

ing for company, and desired to know when we might calculate upon being at Bar Harbor.

Some mild sense of satisfaction was mine as, with thought of my spoiled afternoon, I said, "There will be no dinner for us to-day, Tom. The norther is dying out. If we try to return, we shall be caught in Frenchman's Bay by the storm you see to the southward. I don't mind a ducking—we are in for that—but I won't risk drowning you."

Tom said it was pretty bad, but took the tiller while I double-reefed. As I resumed my place, the north wind ceased with an abruptness I did not like, and for a minute there was a dead calm. The water took on a leaden tint, and the fast coming cloud masses of a dull greenish hue were aglow now and then with grim javelins of violet light.

I saw that Tom was more and more uneasy. He crouched a little as the lightning flared, and said with a sorry attempt to look the courage he did not feel, "R-rather a scrape, Afton, is n't it? G-great Scott! That was c-close." As the thunder followed instant on

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

the flash, his shoulders rose and gave him the appearance of a turtle retreating into the security of its shell.

As it blew harder, I felt that to be caught even in the half shelter of the narrows of Western Bay by the fury of wind out of yonder blackness was not to be risked. Overhead every storm signal was set, and I knew that we were about to encounter something unusual. The north wind came again in puffs and for a time helped my purpose of securing a shelter. Then of a sudden the wind changed and we felt the first irregular gusts of the coming storm. Leaving Tom the tiller with a word of warning, I stood up on the bow to pilot him into a place of security. Although for him it was alarming, and the prospect of wet clothes and no dinner tragic, I was rejoicing in the magnificence of the scene overhead and in the interest of what I saw around me. The rising southeast wind was taking little nips at the black surface, and the large rain drops were making brief, bell-like bubbles, followed instantly by the upleap of dark

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

spikes of water. To westward, still in a clear sky, the setting sun touched with gold every leaping ripple and turned to lustrous bronze the far seen summits of the Gouldsboro Hills on the mainland. It was really an amazing spectacle with something dramatic in the contrasts it offered.

I said at last, "Is n't it glorious?"

Tom said it would be if he were n't so cold. I myself felt the chill of the September evening and too, in the swift coming wind, the colder air from the mountain tops. Presently it would be far worse.

Now and then, as the gale gathered force and the rain grew heavier, I heard Tom's exclamations. His mind was on his dinner, as to which my conscience was quite at rest. At last, as a terrible zigzag of light flashed overhead, Tom cried out, "Oh, don't stand by that m-mast when you're g-getting wet. It's dangerous."

"Getting wet? I am wet," I said laughing. "Run her in there, Tom. Put her head up. So. That will do." I let fall the anchor,

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

dropped and secured the sail, and sat down in the partial shelter of Prettymarsh Harbor.

"I w-won't stay here," protested Tom. "I'm wet."

"All right. We will go ashore. Pull up the skiff. We will make for that house on the hill. I should stand by my boat if I were alone."

"Well, I w-won't."

"All right," I said.

It was now raining harder, and in a minute I was wet to the skin, and the wind so furious that it was a hard pull to the beach. Tom was in as sorry a plight. "Cheer up, old man," I said. "We will go up to the house and make a good fire."

"And get some g-grub," said Tom. "What is the place? It looks shut up."

"Prettymarsh is over yonder," I replied, "and no one lives here. We'll get in somehow."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Tom, amid a solid downfall of rain.

"What's wrong? Any wetter?"

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

"I c-could n't be w-wetter. There'll be thirteen at table! My aunt will never forgive me. I was to dine with her."

"Can't be helped," said I, and strode on doggedly behind him, contemplating the ponderous form, the water-soaked flannels, now a dull gray, the limp dripping straw hat giving an air of singular dejection to his figure.

It was all very sad for a man who divided his time systematically between the grain exchange, bridge at the club, and an afternoon on the speedway. Adventure, bodily risks and the unusual had no place in his ordered life and for him no charm. I began to pity him as he walked on, growling out his usual brief sentences. Even ordinary talk seemed to be an effort requiring pauses and some slow marshaling of his mental forces.

As with difficulty facing the wind we topped the hill, I wiped the rain from my eyes for a survey of the house, which before to-day I had seen only at a distance, but always with a certain interested curiosity. It is visible everywhere from the upper water beyond French-

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

man's Bay as well as from Prettymarsh on the landward side, and is in fact the most notable dwelling in this the flatter part of Mt. Desert Island. I saw it better now, a house of dull ruddy color with a rather small doorway in front and two large windows on each side of the entrance. Some tradition of hospitality and of former importance was indicated by the great size of the house and by the large chimneys over both gables. As we drew near, I observed that the paling fence was in ruin, and what had once been modest flower beds was overgrown with golden rod and asters. The house, if showing no sign of recent habitation, was not dilapidated.

Two fine red-oaks stood just outside of the fence. Under one of these we took shelter, and, as Tom said, took stock of an unpromising situation. Then, with the manner of a man revealing a secret, Tom said, "Tell you something, Afton. The w-water is running down the b-back of my neck worse than it was."

"Me too," I said, laughing.

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

“Is that so?” he returned, as if surprised.
“What a house!”

It was hardly descriptive, but meant, as I soon learned, that it was absurdly big for a farmhouse.

“How to get in, Tom. It seems pretty securely shut up,” said I, as we stood, the wind somewhat broken for us by the house. The day was slowly darkening, while the storm not only gave no sign of ending, but in fact was every minute increasing in violence.

“Let’s go round it and see,” said Tom.

As we turned the corner, the gray lashes of rain driven by a good thirty-mile gale seemed nearly level and stung as they struck the face. Before us were well tilled fields, and beyond the house a barn in ruin. At the back of the house we looked in vain for an easy way of entrance. The shutters were solid and tightly closed. There were none above the first story.

Tom went up the steps and tried the door in vain. Leaning against the door he turned to make this clear to me. “It’s no use,” he roared,

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

for what with a fury of rain and wind beating on the house I hardly heard him. Then there was an abrupt increase in the violence of the gale. A big maple behind me went down with a loud crack and clatter of broken branches, and the door of the house was blown open, slamming inward so that the wind and Tom burst into the emptiness with a whooping sound like a huge, deep inbreath.

“Great Scott!” cried Tom. “Thought a f-fellow opened it behind me.”

“He did,” I laughed, and darted by him through the solid cascade from the eaves. “Come in,” I cried, for the wind-driven rain was flooding the hall. “Quick,” I cried, “and get a big stone.” And this being fetched, closing the door we set the stone against it, and were thus left in a darkened hall.

I had been much on the sea, but as wild a storm as this was a notable event in my life. There was comic contrast in what Tom said.

“I’m glad the w-wind b-burgled for us.

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

We didn't have to break in after all." This reflection seemed to comfort a conservative commercial citizen facing the unusual.

I felt it imperative that we should find warmth, since the early chilliness of a September evening had set in and we were water-soaked to the skin. It was dark in the hall and I struck match after match until, thus aided, I found a closed door opening from the hall into an eastern room.

I groped my way to a window, where I raised the sash with difficulty and threw back the shutters. There was no more than light enough from the outside to show me, as I turned from the window, that we were in a room which had the appearance of being really vast. For a moment this remained unexplained until I saw in the fading light of the storm-shortened day what caused this sense of space without distinct boundaries. Walls, floor, and the heavy rafters overhead were black from the smoke of what seemed to have been a fire once kindled in the middle of the

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

floor of the room. A deeply burned place was left where the fire had burned half-way through the floor. The blackening of the room helped in the twilight to give an appearance of indistinct size and of lack of limiting boundaries. It was mysteriously impressive even after the delusory effect was explained, and was not quite pleasant.

If I was puzzled, Tom was not. "W-well," he exclaimed, "m-must have been a t-tramp did that. I w-wonder why it did n't all g-go."

I made no reply. I did not accept his view of the matter nor yet know why it was not obviously as he put it. Then after a pause he brought out another theory. "That's it! Someone m-might have. w-wanted the insurance." And still I was silent. An effort had been made long ago to destroy the house, but why? Tom's conjectures were reasonable.

I shook my head as I went over to the window and rubbing away the blackened spiderwebs looked through a deluge of rain which

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

beat on the roof with a murmurous humming sound, or swept over it in gusts like the patter of numberless small feet.

“By George!” I cried, “There goes the ‘*Sylvia*!’” As the lightning flashed I made out the boat, dimly seen, bottom up, adrift across the water.

When I announced to Tom that we were mildly marooned, he said that he saw nothing mild about it, but that he would not mind if he had a fire and dinner and a good bed. When I agreed with him, he went on to say that was n’t the worst of it. There was Aunt Martha.

“Well?” I queried.

“She has n’t got any head for arithmetic, but she’s got enough to know there’s thirteen at table. I can see her c-counting them.” I was well aware that Tom had expectations which I was sure made his commercial conscience sensitive in matters concerning Aunt Martha.

“Perhaps,” I returned, laughing, “that fated thirteenth may be Aunt Martha.”

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

"I n-n-never th-th-thought of that," said Tom frankly. I trust that he was measurably consoled.

"Well," I added, "it can't be helped. Come. Let us see what there is in this place to make us comfortable."

His small resources in the language of despair were seemingly at an end. As I spoke he was standing still in wet dismay, all adrip, dolefully regarding the growing pool of water on the floor about him.

"Come along," I repeated. "There is nothing here. It can't be worse anywhere else."

Thus exhorted, he followed my steps into the hall which ran through the house from north to south.

As we struck matches—for now, at least within the house, it was quite dark—we saw small evidence of the smoke, and I concluded that whoever kindled the fire had closed the doors and windows of the room and may thus have smothered the blaze. As we lighted our brief-lived little vesta torches, we saw that the hall was wide and that on the western side

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

was another room. As we passed across it I observed no relics of former habitation except a crane in the chimney place, which made me think it had been the kitchen.

The solitude of the place and the sense of its having once been what now it was not troubled me. People had lived here, but were here no longer. That was commonplace enough, and yet now, interpreted by a mood, it became uncommonplace. There has always been to me something impressive in an empty house, something which sets me to thinking.

It was useless to invite Tom to share my thoughts, and perhaps after all there was not enough in them to make division worth while. I stood looking about me, now seeing, now blind, as the wax matches flared and went out. Strange as it may seem, it was Tom who showed the first signal of any sense of the unusual. In an interval of darkness he clutched my arm and said in the low voice of one startled, "D-did you hear that? Hush! Listen!"

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

"Hear what?"

"A clock. There! You didn't hear. It struck eight."

"Struck nonsense. I wish there were a clock."

"Great heavens, and you didn't hear that? Someone laughed."

"Someone laughed, did they? I wish they had. We are alone, you and I, host and guest if you like. You may choose which you will be. That wind has groaned and howled and whistled in the last half-hour, and you heard it laugh, old man. Well, why not?"

"Damn it," he said, "wind does n't strike eight."

"An old house and a forty-mile gale make a queer orchestra."

"Oh, stuff!" he broke in rudely, for him an amazing thing. "I am not a child. There's something wrong in this house."

"There is n't anything in it wrong or right. Let us have a look at the cellar. There'll be wood there if anywhere. I am chilled to the

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

bones. We must have a fire. And don't waste matches that way, Tom. Mine are nearly all gone."

This I said because as we stood in the gloom Tom was flashing the small wax lights and uneasily turning from side to side. As I spoke, he said, "It's c-coming."

"What," I broke in. The queer ways of my stout friend were vexing me a little and perplexing me more. Well used to the pause before his mental mechanism could become vocally expressive, I waited, making no comment. I heard him move as he said, "I think you are getting n-nervous."

"I—I? Nervous?"

"Yes. I only w-wanted to say that storm would be c-coming back from the northwest. That was all. I don't know what's the matter with you."

This was not like him. He was suffering from an attack of abnormal acuteness of perception. Of a sudden Tom did an unusual thing, and when he said or did an unusual thing, it disturbed those who knew him well as

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

with a sense of shock. He cried, "I shall not stay here a m-minute," and ran by me and out into the hall.

When I overtook him, I made him out by my flashed match leaning against the stair-rail. I said, "What the deuce is the matter, Tom?"

"N-nothing. It was so close in there." He was wiping his forehead.

"Oh, is that all! You acted just the way my terrier Susan did last year. I was looking over an empty house. She sat down to howl in one of the rooms and then ran out as if possessed."

"Hang Susan! I'm cold and wet. Let's get a fire."

We found the cellar door beneath the stairway. Striking a match we went down and found ourselves in a damp, earth-paved space under the west half of the house. It was here quite dark. Tom took one side of the cellar and I the other. There was no wood. Guarding my feeble taper, I came to a corner. There lay on the ground a rusty spade with a broken

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

handle and a mattock. As I looked idly at the worn tools, Tom called out, "Come here, Afton, that 's q-queer."

I turned at his summons and found him standing over the wreck of an old-fashioned mahogany cradle. Neither of us spoke for a moment. I had a sense of awe and of unseen human nearness. Except the canopy and rockers, the cradle was in large fragments. It must have been broken very long ago, for in places it was rotten, a rare thing to see in mahogany.

"It has been sm-smashed with an axe," said Tom. "Queer to want to sm-smash a ch-child's cr-cradle. Who c-could have done that?"

"Who indeed?" I murmured.

"What 's that?" said Tom.

I looked down and saw the remnants of a mouldered, mouse-gnawed little slipper—a child's. I picked it up and turned it over and laid it in the broken cradle as Tom said, "Well, there 's fire-wood at last. Got to have

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

a fire. Can't be any harm in b-burning a b-busted cradle."

"Harm? No," I said, "but something else." I could not have said what else. "I would as soon be warmed by a broken coffin. Let it alone. We'll find something upstairs."

"Oh, darn your sentiment. I'm ch-chilled to the bone." As he spoke he kicked over the broken fragments of the cradle.

"Don't do that," I said, "I say—don't." Upon this he growled, but went back with me to the hall and then up the creaking stair to the second story.

There again was a hallway with doors open to east and west, so that as we stood we could look to right and left into the dark depths of two large rooms. I chose without reason the room to westward. As I moved into it Tom said, almost in a whisper, "I w-would n't go in. It—it's no g-good, and it's so c-cussed d-dark."

"Nonsense," I said, "if you go on this way, we shall either see or think we see ghosts."

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

“Great Scott! G-Ghosts?”

I broke into the comment of a laugh, which brought back a crude echo from the empty chamber. The notion of a ghost's appearing to a stout member of the grain exchange somehow tickled me into a brief mood of wholesome amusement.

“I don't see anything to l-laugh at,” said Tom. “I say—light up. It's awful here.”

I said no more. Both struck vestas and we moved into the dark space before us. Then I stood still. I saw far away, across the room, an answering glow of light, and as if coming toward me the dimly-seen form of a woman, and then a confusion of many figures, appearing to come out of the gleaming distance. All were indistinct; and now of a sudden they were gone. I was simply startled.

“Great heavens,” cried Tom, “what 's that?”

We were moving forward as he stopped, saying, “They came out of that—that—” I saw that our lights were reflected back to us from a full length mirror such as in France they call a cheval glass. I had no more doubt than had

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

Tom that these shadowy phantoms came, or seemed to come, out of the mirror, but to reassure him and myself I said, "Stuff and nonsense. You saw your own image and mine."

"I—saw it—"

"Really?"

Now that we were nearer I understood why we had seen only the reflected flash from the glass. The tall side columns between which swung the mirror were of dark mahogany worn shabby, and were crowned with brass pineapples green rusted. This bit of lonely furniture troubled me more than the delusion of the figures and set me to thinking. I remembered to have heard that the house had been built by one of the early French settlers, people with some means and of a class much above the rank of the ordinary English emigrants.

Alone in the deserted farmhouse, which was only remarkable for its great size, this broken relic of days of luxury and refinement, abandoned as worthless when the owners moved away, affected me strangely. Reflecting upon

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

my excited interpretation of the flash of our wax lights, I stood alone while Tom was opening a window. What fair women had the mirror seen; what gay gowns away in France; what looks of love, hate, sorrow, had its far-gone hours caught. Were they all there still—for nothing is lost—the forms and faces of the dead, generations of unseen pictures.

As Tom's return broke in on my musings I kept up my tiny illuminations, and drawing near to the glass began to examine it more closely. One of the claw-toed legs was broken and the mirror stood awry. There was even in this something pitiful and appealing. A crack crossed the glass from side to side.

As Tom, a little reassured, came near he announced the limits of his wonder. "Was n't worth t-taking. Well I never! That's queer. Don't you n-notice the smell in this room—like—like—dead rose leaves?"

"Yes. What is it? It is like—no—I don't know what it is like. I'll open the other window."

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

As I raised the sash the wind came in and blew out Tom's taper. I heard his quickened step across the room as he exclaimed, "G-good heavens!"

"What?" I said. Not seeing him at all in the deep darkness whence came to me only a scared voice, I put out a hand and touched him. "What nonsense are you talking? Strike a match?"

He did. It was blown out instantly as he cried, "They came out of the mirror. They came again."

"Who came? What came? What did you see?"

"See? Oh, Lord, they are all around me. Can't you feel them?"

"No, I can't, you idiot."

"I can't feel them now, but it's awful."

I neither felt them in the sense of contact, nor saw, nor heard them, but I was as surely aware in the deep gloom of there being persons around me as I was of the presence of Westway. I was past power to reason. Nor had

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

I any sense of peril. I did have something like awe, such as one has in the face of great elemental forces.

Tom was stammering broken phrases in pure fear. His condition rallied me and I cried, "Steady, old fellow," casting an arm over his shoulder. "Come," I said, "there is no one."

"I can't—I can't move."

I felt like him some sense of difficulty in moving. Then with a great effort I went by him hearing him cry, "Don't l-leave me."

I was suddenly aware that they were behind me and none in the front. Tom cried out again in a childlike way, "Don't l-leave me."

"Come," I called, and at the door, "a match, Tom," and struck it as we stood at the head of the stair. I was in a cold sweat. As I spoke I got a look at Tom in the red flare of the match. I once saw a man who in rude health had come of a sudden into the shadow of death. So looked Tom, his face flushed, his eyes red, the sweat trickling down his forehead, his jaws dropped. I may have looked no

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

better. I knew vaguely that we were intruders. All my futile explanatory wrestling was come to a feeble end. I made believe a little. "Come, Tom," I said, "we are a pair of children. Let's go down stairs and wait till morning."

I was relieved when he said, "N-not I. Not a m-minute."

As I made my proposal I was again aware of what I hesitate to call "people." I was at once resolute not to confess to Tom; and indeed my feeling of terror was less and my sense of being unwelcome more distinct.

Hardly to my surprise Tom ran by me down the stairs. He tore open the hall door, and pausing cried, "Heavens," and bounded down the outer steps. I had no intention of making such a cowardly exit. I went down stair by stair. I was rather in a state of tension than of alarm. What I expected from moment to moment was that I should see someone—something. At the last step my expectant imagination, as I then believed, did its work. While taking out my last two tapers I

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

dropped the match safe, and this slight material reminder steadied me, so that for an instant I was again free from the despotism of my belief that I was accompanied by unseen beings. To recover the little silver case I struck the vestas on the wall and, finding the box at my feet, looked up. I was aware of a woman standing in the open doorway. I got but a moment's glance at her, enough to learn that she was young and was in a plain gown and carried in one hand what was called in my grandmother's time a calèche bonnet. The face I saw in the flare of the matches I shall never forget. It seemed to express fear and horror. I stood still a moment really appalled. She moved aside as though to let me pass. The tapers flickered in the wind and went out, the figure disappeared, and I drew a full breath of relief in the open air.

The storm was over. The moon was brilliant overhead. I saw Tom seated under a tree. "Halloa," he cried. "What kept you? A l-little more and I should have gone to l-look for you."

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

"Thanks, my dear fellow."

"No, I w-would n't," said Tom. "Did you, n-now did you see her?"

"See whom?" I asked, quick to test the reality of what I had seen.

"A g-girl—a woman. She had a queer bonnet in her hand."

"Yes, I saw her."

"Well, I say, Afton, we were n't d-drunk or dreaming. No one will believe us." He wiped his forehead.

"No one will believe us; I should think not. Better not try the credulity of our club friends, Tom."

"No indeed, guess I know what they would say, but a fellow might tell a woman."

"What, Miss Martha, your Aunt?"

"Yes, perhaps." The thought struck me as odd.

"You see it would explain things."

"Would it indeed? There would be a more probable explanation. You left your hat in the house. Better go and get it."

"I will not," said Tom.

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

Both were disposed to be silent, as we walked down the hill and found refuge in a farmhouse near by, where we told of the wrecked cat-boat, but no more. Early next day I went with Tom to recover his hat. I found it lying in the hall. Tom declined to enter. We both felt, or I at least, the impropriety of making use of daylight to aid our idle curiosity by a new inspection. I closed the door, and we walked across the fields to return to the farmhouse, where a wagon was ready to take us to Bar Harbor. At the foot of the hill we came upon an inclosure, one of the many pathetic little graveyards to be found here and there on the island. A single large gray stone bore, some scarcely legible, names and dates in the first third of the nineteenth century. Last of all was the single name, "Hortense," and no more.

"Well now, I w-wonder," said Tom. "Was that Hortense, the ch-child?"

"Hush!" said I, a faint sense, perhaps a mere remembrance of unseen listeners coming

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

upon me. "What secrets lay beneath these stones?"

"Now that child b-bothers me," said Tom. "There must have been a b-baby."

"Hush!" I said. "Come, let us go."

"W-well, I'd like to know, Afton. You don't want to talk about it."

"No, I do not."

"All right, but I can't get that smashed c-cradle out of my head, and the spade and mattock and the sh-shoe."

I stood above the grave-stone silent, hardly hearing him. In a little while the slow mechanism of Tom's brain ground out, "Well, but now, s-suppose that—"

"Oh, quit," I cried, and walked away.

At the farmhouse just as we got into the wagon Tom said to the farmer, "Who owns that house on the hill?"

"Some French people did once. They went away in my grandfather's time."

"Anything queer happen there?" asked Tom.

"Yes, but my folk would n't ever talk about

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

it. Those French—they sold the farm and the house, but they kept the graveyard. My father said that when he was a boy he heard say that the house was set afire the day they left, but it war n't burnt much—only one room damaged."

"Yes, we saw that?"

"What! Was you in it?"

"Yes, we got in."

The farmer returned, "I own it and the farm, but my wife won't live up there. And you was in it—after dark?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, is that so!"

"Good-bye," I cried, as we drove away.

Tom was as usual silent and I deep in perplexed thought. I reflected that not always was it Tom who had first felt these ghostly presences. Had I been the victim of the crude imagined phantoms of a cold, hungry, commonplace man disturbed by physical discomfort and a novel environment? But then I remembered that we had both seen the woman. That seemed conclusive.

HOUSE BEYOND PRETTYMARSH

“Give me a l-light,” said Tom. “That cradle was queer, was n’t it, and what you said about c-coffins—”

“Hush!” I said, pointing to the driver.

“But the little s-shoe,” persisted Tom.

“Oh, let ’s drop it,” I said.

THE END

